

## Carrot-Ginger Rice

人参生姜炊き込みご飯

*Ninjin Shōga Takikomi Gohan*



*Takikomi*-style rice dishes are infused with flavor because they are cooked with broth used instead of water – broth that has extracted the essence of flavor from ingredients that will be cooked with the rice... in this case, CARROTS and GINGER. The resulting rice makes a fabulous accompaniment to any omelet, fish or chicken dish.

Try mounding Carrot-Ginger Rice beneath a curried stew or a layer of *soboro* ground meat. Or shape it into *omusubi* to pack into an *obentō*. Use ordinary orange carrots, or for fun add yellow and red carrots if you can source them.

If you can source pink-tipped, fresh new ginger (*shin shōga*) it will add a gentle touch of fire, though juice squeezed from grated mature ginger is fine, too.

Yield, 4 cups cooked rice

- 2 cups Japanese-style (short-grain) white rice
- 1 large carrot (or bits of different colors), about 80 grams/2 ounces total
- 2.5 cups *Dashi* (Standard Sea Stock, separate reference sheet)
- 1 small knob ginger, preferably new ginger (*shin shōga*), about 1/2 ounce
- 1 slice *abura agé* (fried *tōfu*), about 6 by 3 and 1/2 inches in size
- 2 teaspoons *mirin* (syrupy rice wine)
- 2 teaspoons *usukuchi shōyu* (light-colored soy sauce)

Wash the rice well until the water runs clear. Drain and set aside.



Peel or scrape your carrots; cut into thin matchsticks. Place in a saucepan with the carrots and peels from your ginger. Set over medium heat and bring to a boil. Strain reserving the broth (for cooking the rice) and the carrots strips (to add back to the rice with the ginger) separately.



Peel the ginger and cut into tissue-thin slices, about 3/4-inch long. Stack these slices and cut them into fine threads. If your ginger is mature, grate it (instead of slicing it) and squeeze the gratings to extract juice.

Blot the fried *tōfu* with a paper towel to remove excess oil. If it seems very greasy, briefly blanch in boiling water. Then, when cool enough to handle, squeeze out excess moisture. Slice the fried *tōfu* into thin strips to match the size of the ginger threads and carrot strips.



Use a skillet with a non-stick surface. Over high heat, stir-fry the fried *tōfu* for one minute. (There will be ample oil clinging to the surface of the *tōfu* even after blotting or blanching it). Add the reserved liquid from the carrots and season with *usukuchi shōyu* and *mirin*. When the liquid begins to simmer, remove the pot from the heat and add the *shin shōga* threads OR ginger juice. Strain the cooking liquid into a measuring cup (this will be used to cook the rice), reserving the *shin shōga* threads, carrots and fried *tōfu* strips separately.

**To cook the rice in a rice cooker:** Combine the washed, drained rice with the reserved cooking liquid in the bowl of your rice cooker. Add cold water, if needed, to bring the level of liquid up to the 2-cup line. Place the simmered carrot, fried *tōfu* and ginger on top of the rice; do NOT stir up, keep it layered. If using a thermostatically controlled rice cooker, make sure the liquid is cool, or at least room temperature, before pressing the start switch.

**To cook the rice in a pot:** Add cold water to the strained liquid to measure 2 and 1/3 cups total. Place the rice and flavored liquid in a straight-sided, 3-quart, lidded pot. Place the simmered carrot, fried *tōfu* and new ginger on top of the rice; do NOT stir, keep it layered. Cover and cook over steady high heat until the liquid begins to bubble, about 5 minutes. Adjust the heat to maintain a steady but not very vigorous boil and continue to cook, covered, until all the liquid has been absorbed, about 5 minutes more. Remove the pot from the heat and let it stand to allow the rice to steam with retained heat for another 10-15 minutes.

Typically the bottom forms a lightly colored crust known as *okogé*; this can be scooped and mixed throughout, or kept separately. I (and many others who prefer the crusty ends of bread loaves to soft center cuts) have a passion for *okogé* and will often set it aside for nibbling later.



Just before serving, scoop around the edge of the pot (or inner bowl of your rice cooker) and fold-and-toss the carrots, fried *tōfu* and ginger to distribute it throughout the rice. Serve hot, or at room temperature.