

胡瓜と若布サラダ

Kyuuri to Wakamé Sarada

Cucumber & Wakamé Salad



The Japanese often create *UMI no SACHI*, *YAMA NO SACHI* (Bounty of the Seas, Bounty of the Land) dishes... a surf-and-turf approach that pairs ingredients sourced from the sea with those from the land. Here, thinly sliced and salt-wilted cucumber is matched with *wakamé* (dried sea tangle that has been softened) to make a refreshing salad. The classic dressing is a spicy (mustard) and tart (rice vinegar) *miso* sauce called **KARASHI SU MISO** (recipe for the dressing follows the main salad recipe).

SALAD RECIPE

- 2 or 3 Japanese (or other unwaxed seedless) cucumbers
- 1/4 teaspoon coarse sea salt
- 2 to 3 tablespoons dried *wakamé* (sea tangle)



Cucumbers will taste sweeter if you follow a procedure known as *aku nuki* or “bitterness removal.” Slice off a sliver from the darker green, stem end. Holding the sliver in one hand, and the rest of the cucumber in the other, rub the cut ends together in a circular motion. The friction from this action causes a white, pasty substance to appear on the rim of the cucumber. This is what the Japanese call *aku* or “bitterness.” Rinse away the *aku* under cold water, trim off the opposite end, and pat the cucumber dry.



Slice the cucumber in half, lengthwise. Place the two cucumber halves on your cutting board, flat sides down. On the diagonal, slice the cucumbers into very thin elongated half-moons. Place sliced cucumbers in a plastic bag and add the salt. Toss lightly, and then gently massage until you see liquid forming and the cucumbers becoming pliable. Close the bag and let sit for 5 or 6 minutes. Open the bag, drain off liquid, rinse, and drain again. The cucumbers should be pliable and taste SLIGHTLY salty.



Place the dried *wakamé* bits in a 2-cup bowl (they will expand to many times their original size) with one cup of tap water. Let the dried *wakamé* sit for 4 or 5 minutes until just softened. Longer soaking reduces the nutrition and flavor. The water from softening *wakamé* is NOT SAVED or consumed (it contains trace amounts of elements not conducive to good health). When the *wakamé* is softened, drain, and gently squeeze out excess moisture. Rinse, drain and chop coarsely if the pieces are awkwardly large (often hard to tell in their dried state).



DRESSING RECIPE

Karashi Su Miso (Spicy Tart Miso) 芥子酢味噌 makes about 1/4 cup:



Left to right: tube *karashi* (mustard), *Saikyo shiro miso*, *Junmai su* (pure rice vinegar), *usukuchi shōyu* (light colored soy sauce); finished sauce in small dish (far right)

- 1/4 teaspoon *karashi* (mustard)
- 3 tablespoons *Saikyo shiro miso* (sweet, light-colored miso)
- 2 tablespoons pure rice vinegar
- drop of *usukuchi shōyu* (light colored soy sauce) OR pinch salt, both are optional
- 1/2 tablespoon *Dashi* stock, optional OR water

Make the sauce:

In a small bowl, stir the mustard into the *miso*; add vinegar, stirring, until smooth and thick. Some brands of light miso are very sweet. Taste; adjust if necessary, with a few drops of *usukuchi shōyu* OR a pinch of salt. Add stock, a few drops at a time to enhance flavor and adjust consistency. As you add stock, the sauce will lighten in color. Serve the sauce with raw vegetables (daikon, cucumber, carrot, celery sticks, small red radishes), and cooked seafood such as boiled shrimp or tender stewed octopus. Or, use as a spread, in lieu of mayonnaise, when making sandwiches. Store in the refrigerator for 3 or 4 weeks.