

Ordinary Miso Soup (*teiban no miso shiru*) 定番のみそ汁



Miso soup in Japan is served daily, often as part of breakfast, though it could just as easily appear at lunch or dinner. Most Japanese have strong regional preferences when choosing what miso to use; the items floating in the miso soup are likely to reflect the season. Year-round, and throughout Japan, many miso soups will include *tōfu* in some form along with scallions (leeks and/or leafy greens) and *wakamé* (sea vegetable). It is the very familiar and ordinary nature of these elements that makes ORDINARY MISO SOUP reassuring, comforting and nourishing.

Good-tasting, good-for-you miso soup is made with home-made *dashi* stock. Whether you choose to use **Standard Sea Stock** made with kelp and fish flakes or a vegan version, **Kelp Alone Stock** it takes only a few minutes. Below is an ordinary miso-enriched soup you'll encounter in many restaurants and homes, too. Enjoy!

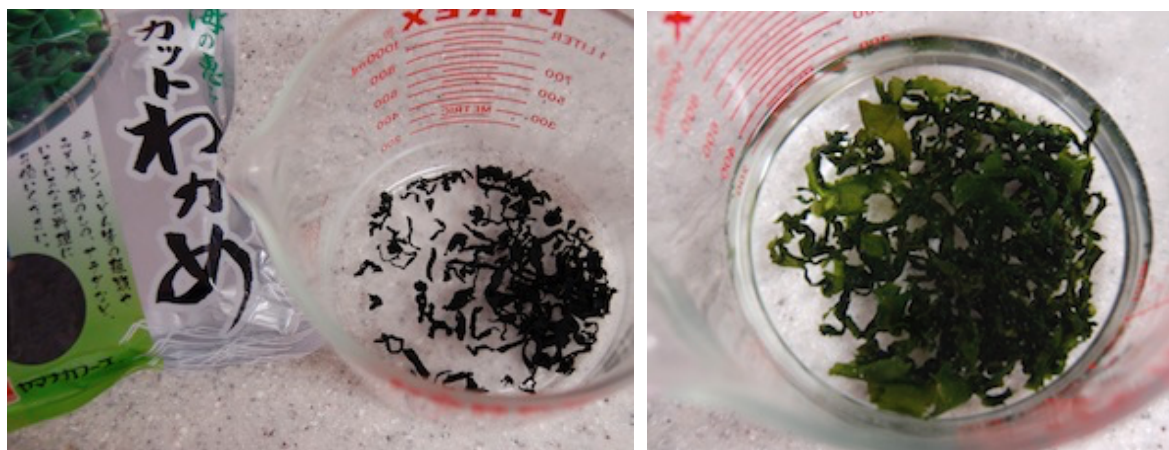
Makes 4 portions.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon dried *wakamé* (*Undaria pinnatifida*; sea tangle)
- 1 scallion, trimmed and finely sliced (and/or leafy tops of radishes, turnips, celery)
- 3 ounces/about 100 grams medium firm *tōfu*
- 1 package *énoki* mushrooms OR *shimeji* mushrooms, about 3 ounces/100 grams
- 3 and 1/2 cups *dashi* stock (see **Kitchen Notes** at end)
- 3 tablespoons *miso* (see **Kitchen Notes** after this recipe)

Method

Place dried *wakamé* in a bowl with tap water to cover. Set a kitchen timer for 3 minutes to remind you to drain the softening sea vegetable. Allowing *wakamé* to soak for longer than a few minutes diminishes its flavor and texture, and lowers its nutritional value. The liquid from soaking *wakamé* is not consumed (it contains trace elements of unwanted minerals). Once drained, chop the *wakamé* coarsely if fronds are large, and place bits directly in individual soup bowls. Place chopped scallions (and/or leafy greens) in the bowls with softened *wakamé*.





Drain the *tōfu* and cut it into small cubes. Most Japanese cut *tōfu* on their hand. *Tōfu* is porous and easily absorbs odors, and germs, from cutting board surfaces. The blade will not cut your palm and clean hands are more sanitary than most cutting boards. However, if you feel uncomfortable with this, place the *tōfu* on a clean board, preferably one lined with paper towels to absorb excess moisture and provide a more sanitary cutting surface.



Trim and cut the *énoki* mushrooms into short lengths, making separate piles of caps and stem pieces; discard the bottom section with gritty material clinging to it. Place the *énoki* caps directly into individual serving bowls.

Place the remaining stem portions of the *énoki* (or trimmed *shimeji* broken into small clusters or individual mushrooms) into a pot with the *dashi* and slowly heat to just a simmer.



When bubbles begin to break at the rim of the pot, add the drained *tōfu* and cook for one minute. Remove the pot from the stove until you are ready to finish and serve the soup. (YES, you can make it to this point and keep it at cool room temperature for 3-4 hours. Refrigerate for longer holding time. When ready to serve, place in a pot over gentle heat and s-l-o-w-l-y re-heat until small bubbles break around the rim of the pot.



Add the *miso* just before serving. This preserves nutrients, flavor and aroma. Most brands of Sendai *miso* are quite chunky with coarse bits of soybean; *mugi* miso is also quite textured.

You can dissolve *miso* directly in the pot using a special *miso koshi* strainer (pictured here) OR place the *miso* in a small bowl, ladle in some hot broth from the pot to thin it, and pour this mixture back into the pot.

Remove from the heat. Pour the soup into the bowls. Serving the soup in traditional, lidded bowls keeps the soup piping hot on the way to table and preserves full aroma for each person as he or she opens the lid.

Don't worry if the *miso* has settled to the bottom and needs to be stirred before drinking: scientifically speaking *miso* is suspended, not dissolved, in the broth.

KITCHEN NOTES

For this (and many other) miso soups, I prefer to use *awasé* (blended) miso. Here I suggest a blend of *mugi* miso (barley-enriched) and Sendai *miso*.



mugi miso



Sendai *miso*

Kelp Alone Stock <https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Kelp-Alone-Stock.pdf>

Standard Sea Stock

<https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Standard-Sea-Stock-Smoky-Sea-Stock.pdf>

Ingredients for *dashi* stock-making: KELP (*kombu*) and BONITO FLAKES (*katsuo-bushi*). Details in recipes above, general procedure summarized below:

- Soak *kombu* in water for at least 10 minutes.
- S-l-o-w-l-y bring to a simmer (a few bubbles breaking on the surface)
- Remove *kombu* and add *katsuo-bushi* flakes
- Strain through cloth after 2-3 minutes.

Kelp-Alone Stock (Kombu-Jiru) 昆布汁



Standard Sea Stock (Katsuo Dashi) 鰹出し (bonito) fish flakes

