

Chrysanthemum and Cucumber Salad

Motté no Hoka Kiku to Kyuuri no Kiku Namasu

もってのほか菊と胡瓜の菊なます



Makes 4 small servings.

2 seedless (Japanese) cucumbers

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 package edible chrysanthemums, purple or yellow

water with vinegar (to blanch flower petals)

Amazu (Sweet & Sour Sauce, to pickle petals):

1/2 cup rice vinegar

2 teaspoons sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt

Prepare the cucumbers:

Begin by removing the bitterness: Slice off a bit from the stem end and use that piece to rub the cut surface in circular motions. A foamy, white pasty substance will form at the edge. This is what the Japanese call *AKU* (bitterness) and the circular rubbing draws it out of the cucumbers by centrifugal force. Rinse the *aku* away, and pat dry.

Slice the cucumbers in half, lengthwise, then on the diagonal to produce thin oblong slices. Or slice into thin circles. Salt the cut cucumbers; wait a few moments for them to “sweat,” then apply light pressure to wilt them. Rinse, gently squeeze; set aside.



Make the *amazu* (Sweet-and-Sour Sauce):

In a small saucepan combine the vinegar, sugar, and salt; adding *kombu* will mellow and improve flavor. Place the pan on the stove and cook over low heat, stirring, just until the sugar and salt melt. Remove the pan from the stove.

This mixture will be poured over the flower petals after they have been blanched. The *kombu* can be used as a “lid” when packing pickled petals into a glass jar for storage, or discarded.

Prepare the edible chrysanthemums:

Pull small clusters of petals away from the center (receptacle) of the flower. To minimize bitterness and discoloration, trim away the white tips with a sharp knife.



Bring a pot of water to a rolling boil, add a few drops of vinegar, and add the petals. Stir and blanch for about 45 seconds. Drain the petals and let them cool naturally. Gently squeeze out excess liquid before placing in the *amazū*. The petals can be kept, refrigerated in the sauce for up to one week. Remove the petals from the sauce just before using. Whatever sauce remains clinging to the petals becomes “dressing” for the salad.



STORING & PREPPING TIPS for EDIBLE CHRYSANTHEMUMS

食用菊

Shokuyō Kiku



Store flowers in their original packaging in the veggie bin of your refrigerator; they will keep for 4 or 5 days. Browning is an early sign of spoilage; remove discolored petals (they make fine compost). Petals that fall away from the center (receptacle) without being plucked are past their prime (add to your compost pile).