

## **NORI MAKI** (Soy-Simmered *Kampyō* Sushi Rolls)



*Nori maki* are narrow rolls of sushi, filled with **SOY-SIMMERED KAMPYŌ ribbons** (recipe on page 4-5). Each roll is made from a half-sheet of *yaki nori* (toasted nori) and uses about 1/3 cup *sushi meshi* (rice that has been seasoned with a sweet vinegar mixture; **SUSHI MESHI** (recipe on page 3). **This recipe provides instruction for assembling 6 nori maki rolls** (each to be cut into 6 pieces for a total of 36 bite-sized pieces).

### INGREDIENTS:

- 3 full sheets *yaki nori*, each cut in half
- 2 cups *sushi meshi*
- 18, 6-inch/15 cm lengths of Soy-Simmered *Kampyō* ribbons (3 lengths per roll)

It will be easiest if you pre-portion your *sushi meshi*. One of the simplest ways of doing this is to dip a 1/3 cup measure (metal or plastic) in cold water (to keep the rice from sticking to it) then fill the measure with sushi rice. Press lightly to compact the rice. Invert and tap to release rice.



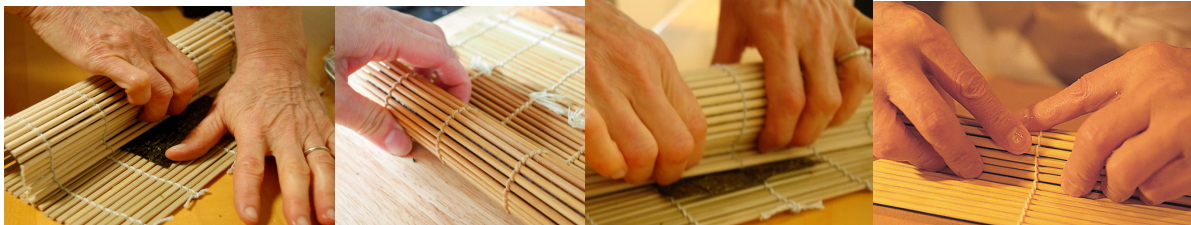
Cut each full sheet of toasted nori in half to make two, narrow pieces. Each of these half-sheets will be used to make a single narrow roll.

Lay a *sudaré* mat on your work surface. Slats run horizontally, string tassels on the far side, away from you. Place a half-sheet of *yaki nori*, rough side facing up, on the mat; the shorter sides of the *nori* should be at the right and left.

With damp fingers, place a portion of *sushi rice* on the *yaki nori*. Spread out so that the rice is slightly higher at back. Leave narrow borders of plain *yaki nori* on all edges to compensate for the rice being pushed outward and back as you roll. Lay soy-simmered gourd ribbons horizontally in the center of the rice (above, far right).



Place your thumbs under the near corners of the slatted mat. Hold the edges of the *nori* in place by pinching with your forefingers. This will leave three fingers “free” on each hand, to hold the gourd ribbons in place as you lift the *yaki nori* over the rice and gourd ribbons, rolling away from you. It is easier to see with an example of *futo maki* plump roll with many fillings (above, right).



With one hand, hold the *yaki nori* in place while tugging back slightly on the rolled portion of the mat. This will ensure that your gourd ribbon filling is snugly enclosed. Continue to roll, lifting the top of the mat and pushing the *sushi* away from you at the same time. Let the roll sit, seam side down, for a few moments before cutting.

Use a sharp knife and moisten the blade by wiping it on a damp cloth. To prevent sticking, you will need to wipe the blade clean after every stroke. Have a tightly wrung damp low-lint kitchen towel next to your cutting board for this purpose.



Slice rolls in half, then each half in thirds to produce 6 small logs per roll.

## SUSHI MESHI (Rice Used in Sushi Dishes)

This recipe makes 2 cups cooked and seasoned rice; enough to make 6 narrow rolls.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup raw rice, washed until water runs clear, and drained
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons cold water in which 1/4-inch strip of *kombu* (kelp) is soaking
- 1/2 cup *sushi su* (seasoned rice vinegar):
  - 1/2 cup of *su* (rice vinegar)
  - 1 teaspoon sugar
  - pinch teaspoon salt

### PROCEDURE:

Place the rice in a sturdy, straight-sided pot. Pour in the *kombu* water. Let the rice sit in its cooking liquid 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 liquid in the pot to a rolling boil. It's best not to 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 (after about 5 minutes). 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.

**OR** use an ELECTRIC RICE COOKER to cook the rice with the *kombu* water.

While the rice is cooking, prepare your *sushi su*. Combine ingredients in a small saucepan. Heat, stirring, just until the sugar and salt melt. You can double or triple the quantities and refrigerate leftover *sushi su* in a lidded glass jar for one month.



Seasoning the rice: It is best to season the rice while it is still warm and therefore more receptive to adsorbing the seasoned vinegar. Transfer the cooked rice to a large bowl, preferably a wooden *handai* that you have wet-down with water.

Toss the rice with a *shamoji* (paddle) while fanning it with an *uchiwa* (flat fan); this will keep condensation from forming (that would water-down the flavor and make the texture mushy) as the rice cools. When there are no more clouds of steam rising from the rice, begin to toss it with the seasoned vinegar.

Start with just a tablespoonful. Using gentle folding and tossing motions, gradually season the rice with more of the vinegar mixture. Taste occasionally to correct seasoning if need be. If it is very bland after using half the seasoned vinegar, add a spoonful of plain vinegar and/or a generous pinch of salt.

Cover the seasoned rice with a clean damp cloth and clear plastic wrap until ready to use. Do not refrigerate the seasoned rice; it will turn hard and crusty. Attempts to warm it up will result in mushy, tasteless rice. *Sushi* rice is a naturally preserved food and will keep well in a cool room for many hours.

## SOY-SIMMERED KAMPYŌ (*Kampyō no Umani*; Dried *Fukubé* Gourd Ribbons)

It is best to source **UNBLEACHED** *kampyō* (*mu hyō haku* 無漂白) so that you can use the liquid from softening the dried gourd as a stock. Buying uncut lengths allows you more flexibility than pre-cut (usually 6-inches/15 cm) ribbons.



Yield: 18 lengths Soy-Simmered *Kampyō*, each 6-inch/15 cm  
Makes enough gourd ribbons to fill 6 narrow rolls (3 lengths per roll)

### INGREDIENTS:

1/2 package unbleached *kampyō* (*fukubé* gourd ribbons), about 15 grams/0.5 ounces  
2 cups water  
1/2-inch piece *kombu* (kelp)

1/4 teaspoon coarse salt  
water to briefly blanch softened gourd ribbons

1 tablespoon *saké*  
1 tablespoon sugar  
2 tablespoons soy sauce

### PROCEDURE:

Soak the dried *kampyō* in a glass jar filled with 2 cups of water and the piece of *kombu*. Soak for at least 15 minutes, preferably a half hour or more. The soaking liquid has become a flavorful stock that will be used to cook the gourd ribbons. Pour the stock into a 2-quart saucepan.

Remove the gourd ribbons from the jar and place the ribbons in your hand with the salt. Rub the salt into the gourd ribbons as though you were trying to remove a stain from clothing. As you rub the ribbons will soften and begin to feel velvety.

Bring several cups of tap water to a rolling boiling in a small saucepan. Add the salt-rubbed gourd ribbons and cook for one minute. Drain and while still warm, transfer the ribbons to the pot with the stock. Add the *saké*, sugar and soy sauce and place this pot on the stove over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar.



Bring the seasoned stock to a simmer and cook the gourd ribbons for 7-8 minutes. For best results, use an *otoshi-buta* (dropped lid) that sits directly on the food (not the rim of the pot). This forces the bubbling liquid to constantly circulate as it hits the underside of the lid, making cooking more fuel efficient and effective (even distribution of seasonings). Lids come in various sizes. Choose one that is slightly smaller in diameter than the pan or pot with which it will be used.

Let the soy-simmered gourd ribbons cool in the pot; it is in process of cooling down that the gourd absorbs the sweet-soy flavor of the simmering liquid. Cut the ribbon into 18 lengths, each about 6 inches (15 cm) long. Each roll will use 3 of these.