

Different Kinds of Rice Flours (Made from different kinds of rice)

糯米
(もち米)



mochi-gomé (left)

粳米
(うるち米)



uruchi mai (right)

Rice that is consumed at most meals, “table rice,” is a grain known as ***uruchi mai*** in Japanese (pictured above, right). It is short-grained and appears somewhat translucent in its hulled but unwashed state. Outside Japan it is often sold as “sushi rice” (since that is the most common use for it in households that do not eat rice daily). That name is misleading, though, since “sushi rice” is really table rice (*uruch imai*) that has been cooked and then seasoned with a slightly sweet vinegar.

When ***mochi-gomé*** (pictured above, left) is sold outside Japan, it is labelled in various ways: “sticky rice” and “sweet rice” are most common, but sometimes packages are labelled with the confusing word: “glutinous.” **All types of rice are gluten-free.** Compared to *uruchi mai*, grains of *mochi-gomé* appear plump and chalky white in their hulled but unwashed state.

In the Japanese kitchen there are four types of rice flour used regularly: two are made from ***mochi-gomé***, another from ***uruchi mai*** and one is a combination of rice flours. The different rice grains are processed by slightly different methods to produce flours of varying texture and viscosity, what the Japanese call *nebari* or “stickiness.”

Some *wagashi* (Japanese confections) are best made with very sticky rice flour (high *nebari*) while others with less *nebari* – much the same as there are different wheat flours. High gluten “hard” wheat is preferred for noodle and bread-making while low gluten “soft” wheat flour is better for cake (also best for tempura batter). **All types of rice flour are gluten-free.**

In general, when choosing rice flour to use as a coating (before deep-frying), those with low *nebari* are best. When using rice flour as a binder (in noodle or bread dough, for example) high *nebari* is best.

Measuring Rice Flour

Japanese home kitchens typically have scales for weighing rice flour and other dry ingredients (metric measures are used). Most home cooks in America use volume measures—cups and spoons—for the same ingredients. I offer guidelines for both methods.

As you can see above, some rice flours are fine powders while others are quite lumpy and chalky. If you will be measuring by volume, it is important that you use the flour **as is**, and do not attempt to crush or pulverize it before you measure it. My measurements have considered the empty spaces that will surround clumps.

So... Unless you have a scale to measure the flour by weight, **all rice flours should be loosely measured into standard measuring cups and lightly tapped down, not leveled with a knife.**



left to right:

「上新粉」 **jōshin ko** is made from **uruchi mai** rice; the rice is dried before being ground to a flour. The result is a fine, silky low *nebari* powder.

「もち粉」 **mochi ko** is made from **mochi-gomé**, dried then ground into flour. The result is a fine, granular, high *nebari* powder.

「白玉粉」 **shiratama ko** is made from **mochi-gomé** that has been soaked (hydrated) until swollen, then drained and dried before it is ground. Water is added and the mixture is set aside until a sediment forms (and a clear liquid rises to the top). The sediment is dried. The result is a crumbly, chalky high *nebari* powder.

「だんご粉」 **dango ko** is made from 50% **uruchi mai** and 50% **mochi-gomé**; both types of rice are dried before being ground to flour. The result is a fine moderate *nebari* powder.