

TSUKIMI DANGO 月見団子 Moon-Viewing Rice Dumplings



This recipe provides instruction for making rice dumplings the simplest way: mix flour and water, lightly knead the dough, shape small discs from it, and briefly boil them.

The dumpling recipe is followed by instructions for making 3 kinds of toppings. Pictured above is the simplest-to-assemble topping: *kinako* soy flour mixed with a bit of light brown sugar. A (slightly more labor-intensive) black sesame syrup and a green, crushed *édamamé* sauce are the other two toppings.

Tsukimi Dango

Makes 30 marble-sized dumplings, 5-6 servings

1 and 1/3 cups (200 grams) *dango ko* rice flour (see KITCHEN NOTES pg. 4),
loosely measured and lightly tapped down (not leveled with a knife)
2 tablespoons warm water

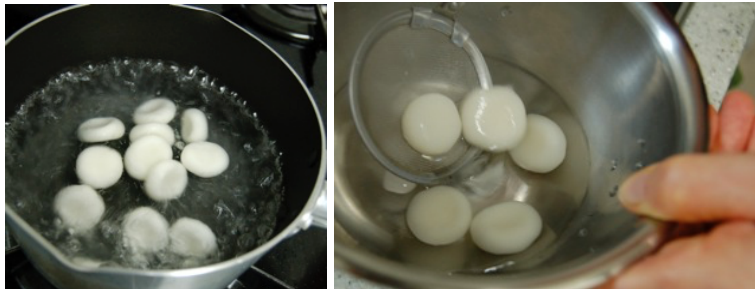
Place the rice flour in a bowl and pour in half the water in a spiral swirl starting with the outer rim of the bowl and working toward the center. Lightly mix. Gradually add the remaining water until the flour forms a mass that easily comes away from the sides of the bowl. Knead lightly to make the mass smooth and slightly elastic.

The dough should be what the Japanese call *mimi tabu* or “earlobe” consistency. Lightly pinch your own earlobe, then the dough in the bowl. They should have a similar texture, soft but firm, with some give.



Divide the dough into 30 pieces. Roll each piece, one at a time, between your palms to form a marble-sized sphere. Press each with your thumb to flatten to a disk shape. Your finger pressure should leave a slight indent. Set aside the disks on a flat plate or tray.

Bring a shallow but wide pot of water to a rolling boil. Gently drop the disks into the boiling water. The disks will bob to the surface as they cook through; allow them to cook for at least one minute after they surface, about 4 minutes total.



With a mesh skimmer, remove the dumplings from the pot and drop them briefly into a bowl of ice, water. Within a minute, drain and let them cool further at room temperature. Prolonged soaking will rob them of flavor and make the texture gummy.

These dumplings are at their chewy-tender best when eaten within 30 minutes of making them. If you need to hold them for longer, cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days. When ready to serve, zap for 20 seconds in the microwave to help restore elasticity to the rice dumplings.

TOPPINGS

Kinako (toasted soy flour)

- 1/4 cup *kinako* (see KITCHEN NOTES pg. 5)
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, optional

Sift ingredients together. Store (for up to several months) at cool room temperature in a dry glass jar with a tight-fitting cap. Use to sprinkle on rice dumplings (or buttered toast or ice cream or yoghurt).

Black Sesame Syrup

- 1/3 cup *kuro neri goma* (see KITCHEN NOTES pg. 5)
- 1 tablespoon sugar syrup (see Zunda Sauce pg 3)
- 1 tablespoon boiling water
- Pinch salt

Place the black sesame paste in a heat-resistant glass jar with a tight-fitting cap. Add the sugar syrup and stir to mix. Drizzle in the boiling water and stir until smooth and syrup-like. Add a pinch of salt (to mellow sweetness) and stir again. Store (for up to 2 weeks) at cool room temperature. Use to drizzle on rice dumplings (or ice cream or yoghurt).

TOPPINGS

Sweet Green Édamamé sauce (called *Zunda* in the Tohoku region of Japan):

Sugar syrup:

1/2 cup granulated white sugar

2 tablespoons water

14 ounces (400-gram bag) flash-frozen édamamé in the pod (about 3/4 cup after blanching, shelling, and removing thin skins)

Make the sugar syrup: Heat sugar and water in a small pot; stir to dissolve. Continue to cook over medium heat, stirring, for 1 minute or until the mixture becomes transparent, bubbly and bit foamy. Be careful not to let it color (turn to caramel) or scorch.



Make the *zunda* sauce: Remove the thin skins that encase each bean (above, left). Place the blanched, shelled beans in a food processor. Pulse process until smooth but slightly textured. Drizzle in the sugar syrup and pulse process further until smooth, shiny, and very cohesive.

When ready to serve, place 5 or 6 rice dumplings in a bowl or on a plate. Place a dollop of *Zunda* sauce on top. Adjust the consistency of the sauce with a few extra drops of syrup, if need be. Ideally it should be thick but not stiff. Serve with a small fork or spoon.



KITCHEN NOTES:

RICE FLOUR

The classic version of *tsukimi dango* calls for using **DANGO KO** (below, right) with medium *nebari*. If you prefer very chewy dumplings make them with **MOCHI KO** or **SHIRATAMA KO** (*shiratama ko* below center). If you like a softer more marshmallow-like texture, you'll find **JŌSHIN KO** (below, left) will be 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. Some rice flours are finely pulverized, and 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 pulverize it before you measure it. My measures have considered the empty spaces that will surround clumps. 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.**

For further information on the various rice flours, refer to [Guide to Rice Flours](#) posted to KCCC September 2022:

Other ingredients (called for when making toppings):



kinako きな粉
toasted soy flour



san on tō 三温糖
light brown sugar



kuro neri goma 黒ねり胡麻
black sesame paste

Store *kinako* at room temperature until opening, once opened store in the refrigerator.
Store *kuro neri goma* at room temperature, once opened store in the refrigerator.