

## 一夜干し *Ichiya-Boshi* (also known as *HIMONO*)

### “One Night” Air-Dried Fish Cooking & Serving *ICHIYA-BOSHI*



Traditionally, bountiful catches of fish were gutted, salted, and set out to dry in order to extend their shelf life and, at the same time, intensify flavor. The generic term for these sorts of fish is *himono*, literally “the dried thing,” though these air-dried fish are actually quite moist to the touch, and wonderfully succulent when broiled.

Air-dried fish are also known as *ichiya-boshi* (literally, “one night dried”), especially when they appear on pub menus, or on breakfast trays at small family-style *minshuku* (lodgings similar to B&B's in America and Europe).

Air-dried fish are increasingly available in Asian markets outside Japan (look in the refrigerator or freezer section of the store). Three varieties, ***hokkē*** (greenling, labelled *imyeonsu* in Korean markets; above center), ***aji*** (horse mackerel; above, left) and ***kamasu*** (barracuda; above right) are commonly available. *Himono* are typically broiled briefly and served with lemon and/or grated radish (*daikon oroshi*).

#### BASIC RECIPE for Broiled Air-Dried Fish (Serves 4)

- 2 air-dried ***hokkē*** (greenling), each about 300 grams (10.5 ounces), or
- 4 ***aji*** (horse mackerel) or ***kamasu*** (barracuda), each about 100 grams (3.5 ounces)
- 2 tablespoons *saké*
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil, optional
- 1 lemon or lime, cut in wedges
- 3 to 4 inch chunk of *daikon* radish, about 3 ounces, grated just before serving

Depending upon the variety of fish, *himono* will be either belly-split (*hara-biraki*), in which case the head is also butterflied (*hokkē* and *aji* are most often belly-split) or, back-split (*sei-biraki*) in which case the head is kept whole, and pushed to one side, (*kamasu* is typically a back-split fish).

*Hokkē* are fairly large fish and often come to market with their head removed. The center bones separate easily from the meat after broiling, making it an easy-to-eat fish. Because *hokkē* can be up to a foot or more in length, a single air-dried fish is often cut in half to make two portions. If you have long, narrow plates and prefer that each portion include equal amounts of head and tail meat, cut the fish horizontally down the center. If you have round, or square plates, cut the fish slightly on the diagonal to yield two pieces, one with mostly head meat (this will have a richer, oilier flavor), the other primarily with tail meat (this will be drier, and flakier).

*Aji* is the most readily available variety of air-dried fish, and comes in various sizes. Choose a 3 and 1/2 ounce (100 grams) fish to serve as a main course for each person.

*Kamasu* is a delightfully briny but mild-tasting fish; it is a bit more challenging to eat because of its many fine bones.

No matter what variety of air-dried fish you buy, if it is frozen, allow it to fully defrost in the refrigerator before cooking it. Begin preparations by rinsing the fresh or de-frosted fish in *saké*. Wait one minute, then pat dry.

Pre-heat your broiler, grill, or fish roaster, to high to thoroughly warm it, lowering heat before cooking since air-dried fish scorches easily. If cooking on an outdoor grill, wait until the embers are gently glowing before cooking. If you like crispy skin brush both sides of the fish **LIGHTLY** with vegetable oil **JUST** before cooking.

**If you are using a broiler or grill (source of heat is EITHER top OR bottom)**, place the fish so that the flesh side is exposed to heat first. Cooking times vary with the size and variety of fish, but on average, most air-dried fish will take about 4 minutes for the flesh to become opaque and the fish oils to begin to appear. The fish also becomes quite aromatic. That is your cue to flip the fish over so that the skin side is facing the source of heat. Another 2 minutes should suffice to complete cooking – the skin should blister, bubble and color in several places. Turn off the heat and let residual heat continue to cook the fish for about 2 to 3 minutes. This final “resting” will also make the fish less likely to stick to the grill, making it easier to remove and transfer to a serving plate.

**If you are using a fish roaster, (source of heat is BOTH at top AND bottom)**, place the fish flesh side up. Cook for a total of 5 to 6 minutes; no flipping is necessary. As the fish cooks it will exude a briny aroma and its flesh will become opaque. After 5 minutes or so its flesh will begin to color (especially the outer edges). Turn off the heat and let residual heat continue to cook the fish for about 2 to 3 minutes. This final “resting” will also make the fish less likely to stick to the grill, making it easier to remove and transfer to a serving plate.

**Plating the fish...** The Japanese typically present small fish, especially whole fish such as *aji* or barracuda, with the head to the left, tail to the right, and the belly facing forward on the plate. This is referred to as the "correct" position. Drain grated radish and coax it into mounds, Use one mound of radish and a wedge of lemon or lime to garnish each plate, if you wish.

