

Flower-Inspired Rolled Sushi



Using white or pink sushi meshi

Makes 6 rolls (36 pieces)

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups **PINK SUSHI MESHI** (recipe begins on pg 2)

3 (full-sized) sheets *yaki nori* (see **Kitchen Notes pg 4**), each cut in half, lengthwise

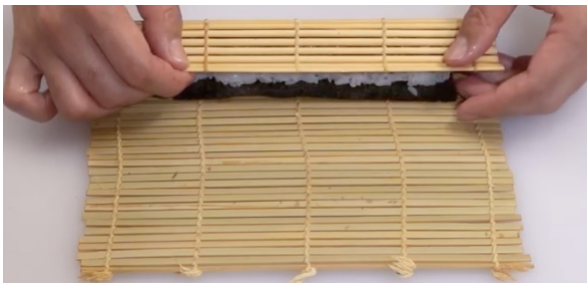
Equipment: *maki su*, also known as *sudaré* (slatted bamboo mat)

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. (Rice shown here is white)



Lay a *sudaré* mat on your work surface with slats running horizontally and string tassels on the far side, away from you. Place a half-sheet of *yaki nori*, rough side facing up, on the mat with the shorter sides of the *nori* at the right and left. With damp fingers, place a portion of *sushi rice* on the *yaki nori*, spreading it out evenly. Leave a narrow border on the far edge to compensate for the rice being pushed forward as you roll.

Place your thumbs under the near corners of the slatted mat. Hold the edges of the *nori* in place by pinching with your forefingers. Lift up and fold over, aiming to fold in half. Press slightly on the far edge to make a **TEAR DROP** shape (unlike most narrow rolls of sushi that are round or slightly squared). Let the roll sit for a few moments before cutting.





Use a sharp knife and moisten the blade by wiping it on a (well-wrung out) damp kitchen cloth. To prevent sticking, you will need to wipe the blade clean after every stroke.

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

Arrange sliced rolls to resemble a flower... further enhance illusion by arranging snow pea leaves.

PINK SUSHI MESHI (made by mixing black rice with white rice)



In this recipe black rice (above, left) is mixed with white (above, center) to enrich nutrition (antioxidants, protein, iron, and fiber) and to turn the rice into a lovely and festive shade of pink (above, right). The change in color is due to a natural chemical reaction between the anthocyanin in black rice and the sweetened vinegar it is seasoned with.

This recipe makes 2 cups cooked and seasoned rice; enough to make 6 rolls (30-36 pieces).

1 cup (200 cc) Japanese-style white rice
2 teaspoons (10 cc) *kuro mai* (heirloom black rice)
1 and 1/4 cup (245 cc) *kombu*-enhanced water (water in which a 1-inch piece *kombu* has been soaked for at least 20 minutes)

1/2 cup *sushi su*:
1/2 cup (100 cc) rice vinegar
1 teaspoon (5 cc) sugar
pinch salt
1-inch piece *kombu*

Place the white rice in a bowl with cold water to cover. Stir vigorously to wash the rice clear of excess starch. Strain the rice and repeat the washing procedure with fresh cold water until the rinsing water runs clear. Drain the rice well after the final rinsing. Mix with *kuro mai* (no need to wash *kuro mai* first) and stir to combine.

Place the mixture of black and white rice in the bowl of an electric rice cooker. Add the *kombu*-enhanced water. Allow the rice to sit in the water for 5 to 10 minutes before pressing the switch to start cooking.

While the rice is cooking, prepare your *sushi su* (seasoned vinegar). 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.

Traditionally, a wide, shallow wooden tub called a *handai* has been used to season *sushi meshi*. A large glass (or other non-reactive surface such as melamine) bowl works well, too. For best flavor and texture, use freshly cooked rice that has sat for about 20 minutes in the cooker or pot (it is still warm but no longer hot).

Transfer the rice to your bowl with a *shamoji* rice paddle. Using light cutting-and-folding motions, break up any clumps of rice. If steam appears, fan it away. The traditional tool for fanning the rice is an *uchiwa* flat fan but a stiff piece of cardboard (such as the back of a pad of paper or the side or flap from a large box) can be used instead.



Season the rice. Drizzle in the *sushi su* seasoned vinegar starting with just a tablespoonful. Using gentle cutting, folding, and tossing motions, gradually season the rice with more of the vinegar mixture. Taste a bit of the rice after using half the seasoned vinegar. If it tastes very bland, add 1 teaspoon more vinegar to the mixture. Continue to add the seasoned vinegar bit by bit until all has been used.

Cover the seasoned rice with a damp cloth to keep it moist until ready to use. Do not refrigerate the seasoned rice; it will turn hard and crusty. *Sushi meshi* rice is a naturally preserved food and will keep well in a cool room for several hours.

Kitchen Notes

Sheets of **YAKI NORI** are sold in a standard size, 21 cm by 19 cm (about 8 inches x 7 inches). Although called “seaweed” in English, *nori* is an alga that is cultivated. After harvesting it is briefly submerged in a cauldron of boiling seawater, rinsed, chopped to a pasty consistency, and then spread on slatted bamboo mats to dry. This method has been in practice for centuries.

<https://yamamotoyama.com/pages/how-nori-seaweed-is-made>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFaPKOHwKg0>

