



## ***Kinomé Aé***

In the early spring, tender aromatic leaves appear on a deciduous shrub called **SANSHŌ** (Japanese prickly ash; *Zanthoxylum piperitum*). Plucked, crushed, and ground with sweet light *miso* these leaves are transformed into a tongue-tingling sauce called *kinomé aé*.

Also in early spring, young bamboo shoots first push their way to the surface of the soil. The tender layers surrounding the tip of the bamboo shoot are called *himé kawa* (“princess skin”) and are especially prized. *Himé kawa* is reminiscent of both artichoke petals and asparagus, though less vegetal. In addition to *himé kawa* spicy *kinomé miso* sauce can be used to dress the conical tip of bamboo sliced vertically into thin julienne strips. Bamboo shoots dressed in *kinomé aé* personifies springtime! Intensely seasoned, this dish is typically served in thimble-sized, mounded portions.

Makes 4 portions.

8-10 ounces/220-280 grams *takénoko* (bamboo shoots), either vacuum-sealed packages of fresh-boiled shoots OR parboiled according to instructions in separate document called <https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/BAMBOO-BASIC-PREP-2024.pdf>

1 cup *dashi*

2 teaspoons *saké*

1 teaspoon *mirin*

1 teaspoons *usukuchi shōyu* (light-colored soy sauce)

SAUCE:

- 5 or 6 leaves of fresh spinach or kale, optional
- 10 or more *kinomé* leaves, finely minced or crushed **OR**
- 1/8 teaspoon finely ground *sanshō* pepper
- 2 tablespoons *Saikyo shiro miso* (sweet, light fermented bean paste)
- Pinch of salt, optional

Prepare the bamboo shoots: Drain packaged bamboo shoots of any packing liquid; drain parboiled bamboo of cooking liquid. Remove *himé kawa* and slice into julienne strips. Cut conical tip vertically into thin “comb” shaped slices.

In a saucepan combine the *dashi*, *saké*, and *mirin* and bring to a simmer. Cook the bamboo shoots in this mixture for 2 minutes then remove the saucepan from the stove and allow the bamboo to cool while you prepare the sauce.



To make a vividly colored sauce, and add nutritional value to it, add a pureed paste of either spinach (left in photo), *komatsuna* (right in photo) or kale to the *miso*-based pepper sauce.

Bring plain water to a vigorous boil and blanch the spinach or kale until barely wilted. Drain, rinse briefly in cold water and squeeze out all excess moisture before chopping finely.



In the old-fashioned Japanese kitchen, the blanched greens would be minced and then forced through a fine-meshed sieve called an *uragoshi* before being mashed in a *suribachi* (grooved mortar). If you will be making this sauce in larger quantities, a mini food processor or other small mechanical chopping or blending device can be used. Otherwise, a sharp knife to mince the greens on a washable board (the chlorophyll will stain wooden and some plastic boards) will suffice.

Combine the green puree with the *miso*. Add the crushed *kinomé* leaves or the ground *sanshō* and stir to mix thoroughly. Taste and adjust with a pinch of salt (if too sweet – some brands of *shiro miso* are very sweet). If need be, adjust the thickness of the sauce with some of the seasoned stock used to blanch the bamboo shoots. Ideally, the sauce should be the consistency of sour cream.

If you are making this the old-fashioned way, add the sweet light miso to the *suribachi* and hand grind to blend. Or, if using the modern method, add the sweet light miso to the food processor bowl and pulse-blend the mixture until smooth. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, as needed. Pulse-blend again until creamy.

Dress the bamboo shoots in the sauce and mound to serve.

