

加薬、炊き込みご飯

Kayaku, Takikomi Gohan
Rice Cooked with Mixed Vegetables



In Osaka and other parts of the Kansai region, what the rest of Japan calls *takikomi gohan* or *gomoku gohan* is called ***kayaku gohan***. The word *kayaku* calls to mind *kampoyaku* (herbal medicine) and Osaka was known for its many shops selling such preparations. In 1902, an Osaka establishment called Daikoku is thought to have pioneered what is nowadays called *kayaku gohan*. There are many variations on the theme today though most include mushrooms, root vegetables such as earthy *gobō*, and slivers of fried *tōfu*.

Making *kayaku* or *takikomi gohan* is a two-stage method of preparing rice. First, ingredients are simmered in *dashi* stock to create a flavorful broth. The broth is then used in lieu of water to cook the rice. The ingredients that contributed to flavoring the broth (vegetables and fried *tōfu*) are returned to the pot in the final stage of cooking. *Takikomi* dishes typically create a dark crust called *okogé* at the bottom of the cooking pot. These crusty, coveted bits are placed on top of individual servings (above, right).

Serves 4 to 6

1 and 1/2 cups rice

a few drops of sesame oil

2 oz/55 grams (about 5-inch/12 cm length) *gobō*, (burdock) scraped, and cut in slender slivers

3 or 4 dried *shiitaké* mushrooms, softened in 2 cups water cut into thin slivers

1 and 2/3 cups strained mushroom liquid (from softening)

2 oz/55 grams (about 3-inch/7 cm length) carrot scraped, and cut in slender slivers

1 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon *saké*

2 teaspoons soy sauce

Wash the rice well with fresh cold water until the water runs clear. After draining the washed rice, set it aside in your stovetop cooking pot or the bowl of an automated rice-cooker for at least 10 minutes, or until it becomes opaque from having absorbed moisture from the washing.

Heat a skillet, drizzle in a few drops of sesame oil and add the slivers of *gobō* and *shiitaké* mushroom. Sauté them to distribute the pieces and lightly coat them with oil. Cook for a minute before adding the carrot slivers.

Sprinkle in the sugar and stir-fry for 1 minute. Add the *saké* to deglaze the pan. Add the mushroom liquid and simmer (preferably with an *otoshi-buta* dropped lid in place) for about 7-8 minutes. During this time, you'll notice clouds of froth forming. The Japanese call this unwanted scum *aku* and removing it is called *akunuki*. This is an important step in making this dish since you don't want scum to coat the rice as it cooks.

Add the soy sauce to the vegetables and stir to distribute. Cook for 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside for 3 to 5 minutes; during this time flavors will meld. Strain the broth, reserving the solids, separately.



Add cold water (or ice to rapidly cool the broth if using a thermostatically controlled appliance) to make a total of **1 and 2/3 cups** liquid.

Once the measured liquid has been added to the rice, return the simmered vegetables to the pot, laying the mixture on top (do NOT mix it with the uncooked rice). Cook the rice using either the **stovetop method** or **using an automated rice-cooker** (see **KITCHEN NOTES** at end of recipe).

Allow the rice to stand for at least 5 minutes and up to 20 minutes after cooking has been completed. When ready to serve, gently trace the edges of your pot to release the rice with a *shamoji* rice paddle or spatula. With gentle cutting and folding motions, scoop down to the bottom where there is typically a darker crust called *okogé*. The rice is delicious served warm. Or, let it cool (lightly covered to keep the surface from drying out) and enjoy at room temperature. It can be stored at cool room temperature for up to 6 hours.

The flavored rice can also be shaped, while still warm, into *omusubi* making fine *obentō* fare.

KITCHEN NOTES

Cooking Rice in the Japanese manner, stovetop method

Place the rice in a sturdy, straight-sided pot. Pour in the measured water (or seasoned liquid you will use for cooking the rice). Ideally, the rice sits in its cooking water for 10 minutes before cooking it. If pressed for time, add 1/2 teaspoon more water. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid.

Over high heat, bring the water in the pot to a rolling boil. Do not remove the lid to check on progress. Instead, rely on other clues; you can hear bubbling noises and see the lid begin to dance (the *choro choro* stage described below). This should take about 5 minutes.

Reduce the heat and continue to cook until the water is absorbed; you may hear a low hissing sound (the *naka pappu* stage described below); about 5 minutes longer.

Increase the heat to high again for 30 seconds to dry off the rice. Remove the pot from the source of heat, still tightly covered. Let the rice stand for at least 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes. This final self-steaming makes more tender grains of rice.

The Japanese have a jingle they sing that describes cooking rice in a pot on a wood-burning stove:

初めチヨロチヨロ、中パッパー、赤子が泣いても、蓋とるな！

Hajimé choro choro, naka ppapa

At first it bubbles, then it hisses.

Akago ga naitemo, futa toru na!

Even if the baby cries (from hunger), don't remove the lid!



Cooking Rice in an automated appliance (electric rice cooker)

The measuring cup sold with rice cookers corresponds to the lines marked on the side of the appliance's bowl. These are **very different** from standard American measurements.

If you want to use the lines on the appliance's bowl, you must use the measuring cup that came with the appliance. The recipe above uses STANDARD AMERICAN MEASUREMENTS.



Most Japanese rice cookers are sold with either an *ichi go* -sized plastic cup. Traditionally in Japan, rice was measured in units called *go* that would fill a single, wooden *ichi go masu* box. The modern cups hold approximately 150 grams of raw rice when they are full; these cups are often marked for metric liquid measures with a line drawn near the top at 180 cc. These **modern Japanese rice cooker-cups hold approximately the same amount as an American 2/3 cup measure.**

In the modern Japanese kitchen, the current “standard” used to measure most ingredients is a cup that holds 200 cc (and is the equivalent of 3/4 of an American cup). To avoid mishaps, be sure to use the same measuring tool for raw rice and water.

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