



つみれ汁味噌仕立て

Tsumiré-Jiru Miso-Jitaté Fish Dumplings in Miso Broth

Making tasty, but not “fishy” *tsumiré* (fish dumplings) requires attention to three processes: (1) making the fish paste, (2) making a soup broth and (3) poaching dumplings before simmering them. *Tsumiré* dumplings are typically made with oily fishes such as sardines (*iwashi*), Pacific saury (*sanma*), mackerel (*saba*) or horse mackerel (*aji*). Fishes in the yellowtail or amberjack family – *buri* (mature), *hamachi* (“young adult”), and *inada* (youngster; below, left) – also make delicious dumplings. If this is your first time making *tsumiré* I suggest you ask your local fish store if they have any scraps – what in Japan is called *ara* – the skeleton, head and trimmings.

If you start with a whole fish either fillet it yourself or have the fishmonger do it for you *sanmai oroshi* style (left) so that it yields two fillets and a skeleton with head. Be sure to ask for all the bones and trimmings: that is what you need to make *tsumiré* dumplings.



If you began with a whole fish, use the fillets to make Salt-Broiled Fish (page 231), Miso-Marinaded Broiled Fish (page 229) and/or Fish Simmered in Pungent Miso Sauce (page 233); page numbers refer to my cookbook **WASHOKU: Recipes from the Japanese Home Kitchen** (Ten Speed Press, 2005).

Similar to French quenelle, *tsumiré* dumplings are made from UNCOOKED FISH. Scrape as much meat/flesh as you can from the various trimmings and skeleton of the fish. Use a spoon and/or small paring knife. You will need at least 3 ounces to make 6 (marble-sized) dumplings; ideally you will have about 4 (or more) ounces. If need be, use the meat from the thinner tail bits of the fish fillets, removing the skin first.



Make the dumpling mixture: Depending upon the variety of fish used, the amount of seasonings may need to be adjusted but here are some guidelines for you:

- 4 ounces oily fish (mackerel, yellowtail, sardine etc)
- 1 teaspoon *miso* (preferably full-bodied “red” such as Sendai miso)
- 2 teaspoons *saké*
- 1 tablespoon chopped scallions, snipped chives or finely minced onion or leek (save trimmings for stock pot)
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger juice (extracted from grated fresh ginger; save the peels to add to stock pot)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

Using a sharp knife, mince the fish paste adding miso, grated ginger and chopped scallion to the mixture. In the old-fashioned kitchen, cooks would often use a *suribachi* (grooved mortar) to mash the fish bits to a paste. In the modern kitchen the fish could be pulse-processed in a food processor but you need to be careful to not over-process. And, to engage the blades fully you will need at least 4 ounces of fish, probably more.



Make a broth from the *ara* (skeleton, heads, and fins):



Before extracting stock, you need to remove unwanted “fishiness.” The Japanese do this by salting the fish scraps (let stand for 5 minutes) and rinsing the fish scraps in cold water. The fish is then briefly submerged in boiling water until whatever flesh clings to the bones appears opaque – as though frost had fallen on the surface. This technique is called *shimo furi* or “frosting.”

Remove the frosted bits and transfer them to a clean pot with any onion scraps and/or ginger peels you have on hand. Add a piece of *kombu* (dried kelp) to the pot and fill with fresh cold water (about 3 and 1/2 cups, or enough to barely cover the fish bits). Place over high heat. When the water comes to a boil, reduce the heat to maintain a slow but steady simmer. Cook for 5 minutes, uncovered. Strain: this will be your soup stock.

Make a poaching liquid from the frosted fish scraps:

Add 4 cups fresh cold water to the pot with the fish bits and place on the stove again. Over high heat bring the water to a rolling boil; add a tablespoon of *saké*. Remove (and compost) the fish bits and use the strained liquid to poach the dumplings.

Begin by adding the *miso* and pulse-process until well blended. Next, drizzle in the *saké* pulse-processing it until the fish is moist and pasty. Add the seasonings (onions & ginger juice; could use any herbs or spices) and pulse-process again. Sprinkle cornstarch over the fish paste and pulse to blend well.

The Japanese use a special scoop to make dumplings (pictured below; the original was made from hollow bamboo cut in half), but the French technique for making quenelles using two spoons dipped in water is fine.



Poach until the dumplings float to the surface (below). Remove with a slotted spoon and add them to the stock. Skim away *aku* (scum, froth) as needed. When ready to serve, re-heat the dumplings in the soup stock. Root vegetables such as carrot, *daikon*, turnips and/or potatoes are often added to make a more substantial soup.



Mix 1 and 1/2 tablespoons *miso* into the broth (use a *miso koshi* strainer or dissolve in a separate small bowl adding to the pot at the last minute). Do not allow the soup to boil once the *miso* has been added.

