

SUSHI MESHI (Rice Used in Sushi Dishes)



This BASIC recipe makes 3 (American-sized) cups cooked and seasoned *sushi meshi* rice, enough to make 4-6 servings of *chirashi-zushi* OR 4 *futomaki-zushi* (plump rolls) OR 8-10 *inari-zushi* (stuffed pouches). To adjust quantities and/or use Japanese-sized rice cups to measure, see **KITCHEN NOTES** at the end of the main recipe.

INGREDIENTS (yields 3 American-sized cups *sushi meshi*):

- 1 and 1/2 cups raw rice, washed until water runs clear, and drained
- 1 and 2/3 cups cold water
- 1 piece (2-3 inches/2.5 cm) of *kombu* (kelp), for soaking in water listed above

sushi su (seasoned rice vinegar; yields about 1 cup:

- 1 cup of *su* (rice vinegar)
- 1 tablespoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

PROCEDURE:

Place the piece of *kombu* in the water and let it soak for at least 10 minutes at room temperature (and up to 24 hours if refrigerated). This produces a flavorful, cold-water infusion that is used, in lieu of tap water, to cook the rice.

Place the washed-and-drained rice in a sturdy, straight-sided pot. Pour in the *kombu* water. Ideally, the rice sits in its cooking water for 10 minutes before applying heat. If pressed for time, add 1/2 teaspoon more water. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid.

Over high heat, bring the liquid in the pot to a rolling boil. Its best not to remove the lid to check on progress. Instead, rely on other clues; you can hear bubbling noises and see the lid begin to dance. This should take about 5 minutes on a standard home gas stove. Reduce the heat and continue to cook until the water is absorbed; you may hear a low hissing sound (typically this takes 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 **UNDISTURBED** for at least 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes. This final self-steaming makes the grains of rice tender.

OR Use an ELECTRIC RICE COOKER to cook the rice.

SEASONING the RICE:

Make the *sushi su*: Combine ingredients in a small saucepan. Heat, stirring, until the sugar and salt melts. Refrigerate any leftovers in a lidded glass jar; it will keep for 2 weeks.



To achieve maximum flavor and texture, season the rice while it is still warm and therefore more receptive to adsorbing the seasoned vinegar. Transfer the cooked rice to a large bowl, preferably a wooden *handai*. With a *shamoji* (rice paddle), use light cutting-and-folding motions to break up any clumps of rice. Fan away any steam with an *uchiwa* flat fan to cool the rice without condensation forming. When there are no more clouds of steam rising from the rice, begin to toss it with the *sushi su* (seasoned vinegar).

Start with just a tablespoonful. Using gentle folding and tossing motions, gradually season the rice with more of the vinegar mixture. Taste occasionally to correct seasoning if need be. If it is very bland after using half the seasoned vinegar, add a spoonful of plain vinegar and/or a generous pinch of salt.



Cover the *su meshi* with a damp *sarashi* (fine woven cotton cloth) to keep it from drying out.

Store at cool room temperature. Refrigerating it will turn the rice hard and crusty.

KITCHEN NOTES

ADJUSTING Quantities of rice and cooking water

- 1 Japanese cup rice use 180 ml water; yield 2 cups cooked rice
- 1.5 Japanese cups rice use 270 ml water; yield 3 cups cooked rice
- 2 Japanese cups rice use 360 ml water; yield 4 cups cooked rice
- 2.5 Japanese cups rice use 450 ml water; yield 5 cups cooked rice
- 3 Japanese cups rice use 540 ml water; yield 6 cups cooked rice

ADJUSTING amount of AMAZU (*sushi su*) to season cooked rice

- 2 cups cooked rice: (2T) *komé su* + 1.3T sugar + 1/2 t salt
- 3 cups cooked rice: (3T) *komé su* + 2T sugar + 3/4 t salt
- 4 cups cooked rice: (4T) *komé su* + 2.3T sugar + 1 t salt
- 5 cups cooked rice: (5T) *komé su* + 3.3T sugar + 1.25 t salt
- 6 cups cooked rice: 90ml (6T) *komé su* + 4T sugar + 1.5 t salt

