

DEEPLY REGIONAL JAPAN®

MASHED RICE AND ADZUKI BEAN FLAT CAKE

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Served as a savoury snack with tomato miso paste

The traditional Japanese cuisine makes good use of what we would call ‘left overs’. The mountainous island terrain of Japan, with its a highly seasonal climate and propensity to natural disasters, meant that the danger of starvation was never far away from everyday life. As a result, the Japanese over the millennia developed a culture that conserved, recycled and preserved the resources at hand (unfortunately a far cry from the modern-day Japan).

Inspired by the ‘gohei-mochi’ from the mountainous areas of central Japan and the ‘gappara-mochi’ from northern Japan (see my recipes for gohei-mochi and gappara-mochi, if you are interested), this simple recipe uses a small quantity of left-over steamed rice from a previous meal. White rice, brown rice and mixed grains (in my case, brown rice, white rice and pearl barley) are all suitable—bearing in mind that wholegrains will not bind as well as white rice, and the amount of added starch or flour should be adjusted. The addition of adzuki beans provides a slightly nutty (and curiously chocolaty) aroma for interest—you can also use other beans such as black turtle, kidney and cannellini, chopped nuts such as walnut, almond and peanut, and even pre-steamed sweet potatoes and pumpkin. Boiling your own adzuki (or other beans) from dry beans is preferable, but you can also use canned boiled beans—though be sure that it is not excessively sweetened or salted.

I have left out strongly flavoured seasonings out of the recipe so that it can be served in both savoury and sweet guises. Brush it with miso, soy sauce or sweet chilli sauce for a snack to go with

your favourite drinks. Spread some jam, or dust it with cinnamon sugar as a sweet treat to go with your coffee or tea.

INGREDIENTS

- Steamed rice 1½ cup
- Boiled adzuki beans (see separate recipe on how to prepare this from dry beans; alternatively, use canned beans) 1½ cup
- Hot water 1 cup (adjust according to texture)
- Potato starch ½ cup (adjust according to texture)
- Fine rice bran ½ cup (adjust according to texture)
- OPTIONAL: Salt ½ level teaspoon or to taste
- OPTIONAL: Sugar ¼ level teaspoon or to taste
- Oil (for greasing the pan) As required

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a heat-resistant bowl, combine the steamed rice with c. ½ cup of hot (80 to 90 °C) water. Mash until the rice grains are broken but not completely mashed.



2. Add the boiled adzuki beans and the remaining hot water. Mash further until the beans are broken.



3. Add the rice bran and the optional salt and/or sugar. Mix thoroughly. Then add the potato starch incrementally, mixing continually to prevent lumps of starch from forming. The final consistency of the dough should be slightly sticky and stiff enough for a spatula to stand in it without falling over. (Adjust with additional potato starch if the dough is too loose, and with water if too dry and crumbly.)



4. Heat a well-greased frying pan over medium–high heat. The pan should be large enough to accommodate the dough spread into a ‘pancake’ 7 mm to 1 cm thick. When the pan has heated fully (test with a tiny piece of dough for sizzling), place the dough in the pan and flatten into a circular disc 7 mm to 1 cm thick. Once sizzling steadily, lower the heat to low–medium and bake slowly.



5. Monitor regularly and turn over to bake the other side when the bottom has developed a hard crust. The flat cake is quite brittle at this stage and can break easily, so be gentle when turning over—use an inverted plate or lid over the pan to assist (please take extreme care to prevent burning yourself with hot oil etc when doing this). Best results are obtained if the flat cake is turned over a few times for slow and even baking. Remove from the heat when both sides have become crisp and light brown.
6. Serve with either savoury or sweet toppings. A ‘wicked’ way to serve it sweet is to gently steam it for a few minutes and pour caramel sauce over it, or gently simmer it in a sugar syrup—it will turn out quite a bit like a sticky date pudding, but much lighter.