

DEEPLY REGIONAL JAPAN®

‘ANPURA-JIRU’: AKITA-STYLE STICKY POTATO CAKE STEW

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‘Anpura-mochi’ is the sticky potato cake traditional to Oga Peninsula in Akita area of the Tōhoku region, northern Japan. Among the many ways anpura-mochi is enjoyed, one of the most popular is ‘anpura-jiru’, essentially a country-style stew with the potato cakes added. The dashi-based broth can be flavoured with miso, soy sauce or ‘shottsuru’ (Akita-style fish sauce), and some recipes include chicken or seafood. The stew is often enjoyed during the long, snowy and windy winters of Oga Peninsula, using potatoes harvested in summer.

The recipe here is a simple one using konbu-based dashi and flavoured with miso. I have kept the recipe deliberately light so that the subtly savoury flavour of the potato cake is not overwhelmed. Feel free to vary the recipe to suit your taste. For the meat-lovers, the recipe also works very well with chicken stock instead of dashi, plus light-flavoured meat such as chicken or pork. For the seafood-lovers, try using Asian-style fish sauce instead of soy sauce or tamari, and add prawns, white-fleshed fish, and/or salmon. Adjust the amount of seasonings though, so the broth does not get too salty. For a completely vegetarian option, leave out the katsuobushi (bonito flakes).

Please refer to a separate recipe for instructions on how to make anpura-mochi.

INGREDIENTS (for 3 to 4 persons)

- Anpura-mochi, baked or pan-fried (see separate recipe for how to make it) 8 pieces
- Dried konbu (hard type for dashi making preferred) 10 to 15 cm length
- Water c. 5 cups (1250 ml)
- Miso (any type) 2 level tablespoons or to taste
- Japanese soy sauce or tamari 1 level tablespoon or to taste
- Katsuobushi (smoked bonito flakes), finely crushed c. ¼ cup
- Ginger root, thinly sliced c. 3 mm thick c. 3 cm length of root
- OPTIONAL: Japanese sake (or vodka) 1 level tablespoon
- OPTIONAL: Sugar 1 level teaspoon or to taste
- Leek, cut lengthwise (along fibre) into very thin strips c. 5 cm long and 3 to 5 mm wide 1 small stem
- Daikon, halved or quartered, and sliced c. 1 cm thick c. 10 cm length of root (with diameter of c. 5 cm)
- Carrot, sliced 1 to 2 cm thick 1 to 2 medium-sized
- Green leafy vegetables (e.g. Chinese cabbage, mizuna, shungiku, flat-leaf parsley, rocket), coarsely cut As required
- OPTIONAL: Fresh shiitake or other mushrooms, whole or halved if large As required
- OPTIONAL: Firm tofu, cut into cubes c. 3 cm As required

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Soak the konbu in c. 5 cups of water. Allow at least one hour to rehydrate fully (preferably 2 to 3 hours). Once rehydrated, cut the konbu into squares 3 to 4 cm across, then place the konbu and the soaking water in a saucepan large enough to hold all ingredients for the stew.



2. Add to the saucepan soy sauce/tamari, katsuobushi, ginger, daikon, carrot, and the optional ingredients of sake/vodka, sugar and/or shiitake/mushrooms. Place over medium heat and

bring to the boil. Once boiling, lower the heat to low–medium, cover with a lid and gently simmer. Carefully skim off any froth that floats to the surface.



3. Once the daikon and carrot are fully cooked (can test with a thin bamboo skewer or toothpick) but still firm and not losing shape, add the leek and the optional tofu. Continue simmering covered.



4. Once the leafy part of the leek is starting to turn bright green (they do not need to be soft), stir in the miso until fully dissolved in the broth, then immediately take off the heat. Add the leafy green vegetables if you like them cooked (otherwise add them just before serving). Cover with the lid and stand for c. 5 minutes.



5. Add the baked or pan-fried anpura-mochi, and serve immediately. You can serve your anpura-jiru either in a large casserole or ‘donabe’ (Japanese claypot) and place in the middle

of the table to share, or dish out individual serves in bowls. Either way, the different ingredients should be arranged in an aesthetically pleasing way.