

DEEPLY REGIONAL JAPAN®

MIZU-YŌKAN: SWEET ADZUKI BEAN JELLY

3 January 2020; UPDATED: 5 January 2020



‘Mizu-yōkan’ is a lighter version of the well-known traditional Japanese confectionery ‘yōkan’—the stiff-textured jelly of adzuki bean paste set with kanten (agar). The main difference in the recipes is the amount of water relative to that of the kanten; ‘mizu-yōkan’ literally means ‘water yōkan’. The dessert is popular in Japan during the hot, humid summer months, when it is served well chilled. Different types of bean pastes are used, and some variants contain matcha (green tea) powder, candied chestnuts, fruit pastes or even fresh fruit.

In this recipe, I use a coarse-textured sweet adzuki bean paste called ‘tsubu-an’ in Japanese. For a smoother texture (without the bits!), use the ‘koshi-an’, which is made by passing the paste through a fine-meshed sieve. You can buy cooked adzuki beans and sweet adzuki bean paste in a canned form from many Asian grocery stores, but the paste is very easy and economic to make your own from scratch. Please refer to the separate recipe for how to make sweet adzuki bean paste at home.

INGREDIENTS

- Coarse-textured sweet adzuki bean paste (tsubu-an; see separate recipe on how to prepare this yourself) 300g (c. 1 cup)
- Sugar 60 to 100 g (c. 1/3 to 1/2 cup), adjust according to the sweetness of your adzuki bean paste
- Kanten (agar) powder 4 g
- Water 400 ml

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a saucepan, combine the kanten powder with water and mix thoroughly. Bring to boil on medium heat, stirring frequently to prevent kanten from settling to the bottom and burning on.



2. Once boiling, add the sugar and stir through until dissolved. Gently boil for a further 2 to 3 minutes. Lower the heat if required and stir from time to time to prevent lumps from forming. (N.B. Kanten tends to boil over very easily, so do not leave the saucepan while cooking.)



3. Just before removing from heat, add the adzuki paste and mix thoroughly to a smooth consistency.



4. Sit the saucepan in a bath of cold water, taking care that the water does not spill into the saucepan. The mixture in the saucepan will start to gel from the edges as it cools. Using a whisk, gently mix the solidifying parts back into the liquid part. Repeat every few minutes until the entire mixture is starting to gel—the consistency should be like a very loose jelly—do not leave until it has set solid. If the water in the bowl has become warm, replace with fresh cold water.



5. Pour the mixture carefully into a moistened rectangular container. The size of the container should be such that the jelly will be 3 to 7 cm thick. Seal the container and place in the refrigerator to set.



6. Serve cut into small rectangular slices. Your mizu-yōkan will keep refrigerated for about 3 days. Be sure to store in a sealed container to prevent it from drying out.