

# DEEPLY REGIONAL JAPAN®

## ‘OHITASHI’-STYLE SALAD OF SQUID, KOHL RABI AND WATERMELON DAIKON IN DASHI AND SWEETENED VINEGAR

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The Japanese are among the largest consumers of squid in the world. So it is perhaps not surprising that traditional Japanese cuisine has more ways of preparing squid than any other food traditions around the world—sashimi, grilled, stir-fried, deep-fried, stewed, poached, and even fermented, to name a few.

Poached squid is very popular in Japan as an addition to cold salad-type dishes, including ‘ohitashi’—what we might call a salad of cooked vegetables. Squid contributes a good deal of umami to the otherwise bland vegetables, while its delicate flesh soaks up the flavours of the dressing.

In this recipe, I have paired poached squid with julienned kohlrabi, ‘watermelon’ daikon radishes, konbu seaweed and mandarin peel for a great flavour and colour sensation. The sweetness of kohlrabi, in particular, complement the flavours of squid, while the citrus freshness of the mandarin peel neutralises any ‘fishy’ aroma that the squid may carry. As the vegetables in this recipe are not cooked, I have called it an ‘ohitashi-style’ salad—as ohitashi dishes, by definition, use cooked vegetables.

The recipe has also been developed with the current COVID-19 outbreak in mind—the abundant zinc and taurine in squid, fucoidan in konbu, and hesperidin in mandarin peel are all recognised in the medical world as potentially having protective effects against COVID-19 infection. So, stay healthy and enjoy the culinary journey along the way!

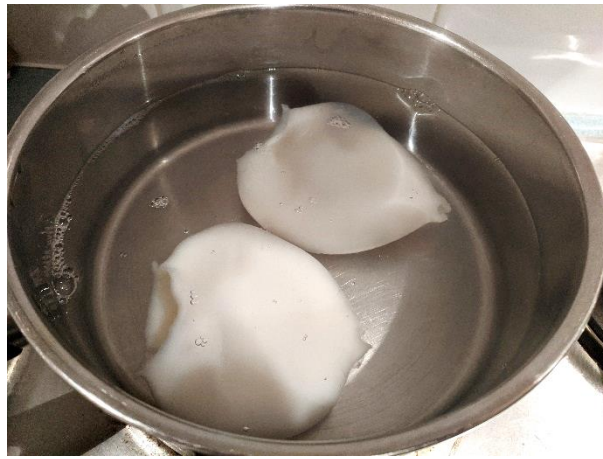
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## INGREDIENTS (as a small side dish for 3 to 4 persons)

- Raw squid (calamari) tube, cleaned 2 small to medium-sized
- Kohl rabi c. 2 small-sized
- ‘Watermelon’ daikon c. 3 small-sized
- Mandarin or lemon peel, finely shredded c. ¼ cup
- Rehydrated and cooked konbu from dashi making, finely shredded, c. 3 mm wide and up to 5 cm long c. ¼ cup
- Tops of kohl rabi and/or daikon (Alternatively, salad greens such as mizuna, lettuce, French sorrel, rocket, shallot/spring onion leaves), finely chopped c. 1 cup (loosely packed)
- Dashi liquid (Konbu, katsuo or konbu–katsuo; see separate recipes on how to prepare these) 1 cup (250 ml)
- Rice vinegar (or other mild vinegar, e.g. fruit vinegars) 3 level tablespoons or to taste
- Soy sauce or tamari 3 level tablespoons or to taste
- Japanese sake (or vodka, medium sherry, semi-sweet white wine) 3 level tablespoons
- Mirin (or sweet sherry, sweet white wine) 2 level tablespoons
- OPTIONAL: Sugar 1 level teaspoon or to taste
- OPTIONAL: Salt, ground pepper, shichimi (Japanese seven-spice chilli powder) or chopped chilli To taste

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine the dashi liquid, vinegar, soy sauce/tamari, 2 level tablespoons of sake (or substitute; retain one tablespoon for Step 5), mirin (or substitute), and sugar (optional) in a small saucepan. Place over medium heat and bring to the boil. Once boiling, lower the heat and simmer gently for c. 2 minutes. (Add water during simmering to replenish the volume if a substantial amount of water evaporates.) Remove from the heat, and allow to cool to room temperature. Set aside.
2. Wash the squid tubes briefly under cold running water. Remove any hard parts that are still attached.
3. Fill a saucepan large enough to hold the squid tubes with water. Place over medium heat and bring it just to boiling. Place the squid tubes in the hot water, cover with a lid and IMMEDIATELY remove from the heat. Stand to poach off the heat for c. 2 minutes, turning over the tubes after a minute for even cooking on both sides.



4. After poaching for c. 2 minutes, remove the squid from the hot water and rinse under cold water. Drain and allow to cool to room temperature.



5. Once cool, cut the squid tubes along both sides to form flat sheets, then slice into very fine (2 to 3 mm wide) strips using a very sharp knife. Sprinkle one level tablespoon of sake (or substitute) over the cut squid, mix to coat the strips evenly, and marinate for at least 15 minutes. If the alcohol content of sake (or substitute) is an issue, rinse the squid strips briefly with hot water at the end of marinating. Set aside.



6. Peel the kohlrabi and remove the very hard part at the bottom of each ‘bulb’—also peel the daikon if the skin is tough or discoloured. Julienne the kohlrabi and daikon very finely (c. 3 to 4 mm wide, up to 5 cm long).





7. Combine the prepared squid, kohlrabi and daikon with the shredded mandarin/lemon peel and konbu, and the chopped tops of kohlrabi/daikon (or salad greens). Pour the dressing prepared at Step 1 over the salad ingredients and mix well. Place in a serving dish, and sprinkle with optional ingredients of your choice. Serve with other dishes as part of a meal menu.

**CHEF'S NOTES:** The peels of the kohlrabi and daikon should not be discarded—they are full of nutrition and, in the case of daikon, have a faintly savoury flavour. Finely shredded, they make a perfect candidate for 'kakiage' or tempura fritters. See my recipes for kakiage using 'scraps'.