

# DEEPLY REGIONAL JAPAN<sup>®</sup>

## POTATO, BEAN AND TAPIOCA ‘MOCHI’ SLICE

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Another in my series of ‘flourless’ recipes using potatoes, I came up with this recipe influenced by Japanese “mochi” (sticky rice cake) and Southeast Asian tapioca dessert recipes. Potatoes and sweet potatoes are a great flour substitute, given that they are cheap, provide bulk and, even during the dire flour shortage at the height of the initial COVID-19 outbreak, readily available in shops. Combined with tapioca starch, the floury potato magically develops a moist and sticky ‘mochi’ texture on the inside of the slice, which contrasts well with the baked exterior of the slice. The addition of a little soy sauce is a common ‘trick’ in traditional Japanese sweets, which provides a background savoury note to balance the sweetness.

The slice can be baked in the oven as with normal slices and cakes, or in a small, sufficiently deep frying pan over a stove. I use a Japanese rectangular ‘tamagoyaki’ (egg roll) pan, which is perfect for the job, but a round pan would be fine too.

Instead of potato, you can also use sweet potato, as long as you use the floury-textured varieties with reddish purple or white skin, and not the common orange-red ‘Beauregard’ variety (which tends to make the dough too wet). In terms of beans, I like adzuki or black turtle beans for colour effects, however, you can use other ‘floury’ types that mash well such as cannellini or kidney beans. It may be more convenient to boil the beans in bulk, and the remaining portion used in your other dishes.

## INGREDIENTS

- Potato (baking or mashing variety) 5 medium-sized (c. 600 g, equivalent to c. 2 cups mashed)
- Tapioca starch 1 cup (c. 140 g)
- Boiled adzuki beans or black turtle beans (see separate recipe) 1 cup (c. 200 g)
- Raw sugar ½ cup (c. 100 g) or to taste
- Cinnamon (or allspice, cardamom, or a combination of these) 1 level teaspoon
- Soy sauce or tamari 1 to 1½ level teaspoons
- Oil (to grease pan/baking tin) As required

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Note that the boiled adzuki (or other) beans require preparation in advance. See the separate recipe for 'Boiling adzuki and other beans' for details.
2. Peel the potatoes and cut into pieces c. 5 cm across. Place in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil on medium heat, covered with a lid.



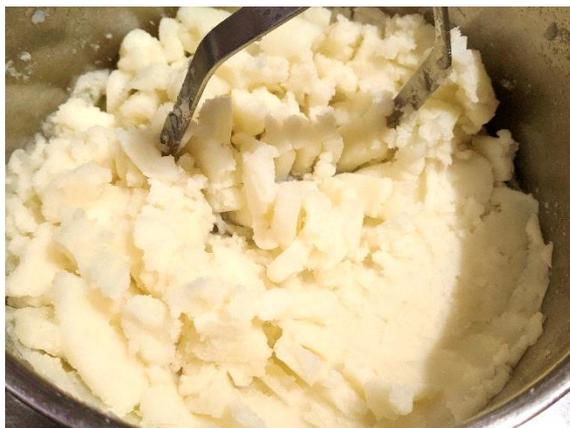
3. Once the potatoes are cooked through (test with a thin bamboo skewer or similar; it should go through without resistance) but still firm (not falling apart), remove from the heat and tip out the boiling water. Refill the saucepan with fresh water to cover the potatoes, then tip out the water to rinse away any remaining froth.



4. Refill the saucepan with a little water, such that it stands c. 1 cm at the base of the saucepan. Place back on medium heat and bring back to the boil. Stir continually to prevent burning. Once all the liquid has evaporated, remove from the heat and allow to cool for handling.



5. Mash the boiled potatoes while warm to a smooth paste. Transfer to a large bowl, combine with the boiled beans and continue to mash until the beans are partially mashed. Add the sugar, soy sauce and cinnamon (or other spices), and mix thoroughly.



6. Finally, add the tapioca starch in increments, mixing continually to eliminate all lumps. The dough should be soft, sticky and wet, but not runny or crumbly—it should hold together by itself, but be elastic enough to be moulded into a baking tin or frying pan. (If required, add more tapioca starch or water to correct the consistency.)



7. You can bake your cake either in an oven as you would with a normal flour-based slice, or in a small, sufficiently deep frying pan—if you have a rectangular pan for baking Japanese ‘tamagoyaki’ (egg rolls), this would be ideal. Ensure that the dough mixture sits 1.5 to 3 cm deep in your baking tin or frying pan—too thin and the mixture will easily burn, too thick and it may not cook fully inside. If your baking tin or frying pan is very small, bake in batches. Be sure to grease your baking tin or frying pan very well to prevent sticking—lining additionally with baking paper may be a good idea.
8. [For baking with a frying pan] Place the greased frying pan over medium heat. Place the dough mixture in the pan when the pan has heated fully (test with a tiny piece of the dough for gentle sizzling). Spread the dough evenly to fill the pan, and form a flat and smooth surface at the top using a spatula or similar. Lower the heat to low–medium, cover with a sheet of baking paper or aluminium foil to assist the top to solidify, and bake slowly. When the dough starts to solidify around the edges, use a spatula to create a narrow gap between the dough and the side of the pan. Also, test to see if the base of the slice has solidified (and not burning) by gently lifting with a spatula—but do not force the dough off the base of the pan if the dough has not yet solidified.



9. Turn over when the top of the slice is solidifying. Use the sheet of baking paper/aluminium foil in combination with an inverted plate to assist in turning over the slice—take care as the slice will have a soft and ‘floppy’ texture. Return the slice to the pan for baking the other side. It may help to turn over the cake a few times for even baking, and to prevent burning.



10. Remove from the heat when both sides have browned. Allow to cool to room temperature. Cut into portions and enjoy.

11. Your slice should keep for at least 2 to 3 days. If preferred, 'refresh' the slice just before serving by warming it in a frying pan over low–medium heat.