

SUSHI MESHU (Rice Used in Sushi Dishes)

This recipe makes 3 cups cooked rice; enough to make 6 mini plump rolls.

INGREDIENTS:

1 and 1/2 cups raw rice, washed until water runs clear, and drained
1 and 2/3 cups cold water + piece of *kombu* (kelp) soaking in water
sushi su (seasoned rice vinegar; yields about 1 cup:
1 cup of *su* (rice vinegar)
1 tablespoons sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt

PROCEDURE:

Place the rice in a sturdy, straight-sided pot. Pour in the *kombu* water. Ideally, the rice sits in its cooking water for 10 minutes before cooking it. If pressed for time, add 1/2 teaspoon more water. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid.

Over high heat, bring the water in the pot to a rolling boil. Its best not to remove the lid to check on progress. Instead, rely on other clues; you can hear bubbling noises and see the lid begin to dance. This should take about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat and continue to cook until the water is absorbed; you may hear a low hissing sound (about 5 minutes longer). Increase the heat to high again for 30 seconds to dry off the rice. Remove the pot from the source of heat, still tightly covered. Let the rice stand for at least 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes. This final self-steaming makes more tender grains of rice.

OR

Use an ELECTRIC RICE COOKER to cook the rice.

SEASONING the RICE:



To achieve maximum flavor and texture, season the rice while it is still warm and therefore more receptive to adsorbing the seasoned vinegar. Transfer the cooked rice to a large bowl, preferably a wooden *handai*.

Make the *sushi su*: Combine ingredients in a small saucepan. Heat, stirring, until the sugar and salt melts. Refrigerate any leftovers in a lidded glass jar; it will keep for 2 weeks.

Toss the rice with a *shamoji* (paddle) while fanning it with an *uchiwa* (flat fan) to cool without condensation forming. When there are no more clouds of steam rising from the rice, begin to toss it with the seasoned vinegar. Start with just a tablespoonful. Using gentle folding and tossing motions, gradually season the rice with more of the vinegar mixture. Taste occasionally to correct seasoning if need be. If it is very bland after using half the seasoned vinegar, add a spoonful of plain vinegar and/or a generous pinch of salt.

Cover the seasoned rice with a clean damp cloth and clear plastic wrap until ready to use. Do not refrigerate the seasoned rice; it will turn hard and crusty. Attempts to warm it up will result in mushy, tasteless rice. *Sushi* rice is a naturally preserved food and will keep well in a cool room for many hours.