

花蕪

THREE-COLORED TURNIP FLOWERS

Sanshoku Hana Kabu



This recipe combines a lesson in decorative knife skills and a chance to explore a few special pantry items used to dye foods – naturally! Look at the photo-illustrated explanations at end of recipe for details on dried gardenia pod (*kushinashi no mi*) for yellow food coloring, and *yukari* leaves in brine (or *umezu* plum vinegar) for pink-purple food coloring.

Makes 6 flowers, 2 of each color.

Amazu (sweet & sour sauce):

2/3 cup *su* (rice vinegar)

1/3 cup sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt

1-inch piece *kombu* (kelp); optional

1 dried *tōgarashi* pod (red chili pepper), broken with seeds removed

1 dried gardenia pod (*kushinashi no mi*), cracked

1/4 teaspoon lemon zest, or small strip of peel from *yuzu* (Japanese citron)

2 to 3 *yukari* leaves in brine (the kind used to pickle plums)

OR *umezu* (plum vinegar); see **note** below

6 small Japanese white turnips (*kokabu*)

1/4 teaspoon salt

toasted black and/or white sesame seeds, *shichimi tōgarashi* (fiery blend of spices)

PROCEDURE:

In a non-reactive pot, mix the *amazu* ingredients and bring to a simmer, stirring.

Adding the kelp will mellow the sharpness of the vinegar. Cook just until the sugar and salt has completely melted.

Note: if using *umezu*, to tint the turnips pink, use the following proportions:

3 tablespoons *umezu* + 1 tablespoon *su* (rice vinegar)

2 tablespoons water

2 tablespoons sugar

Let the sauce cool in the pot before transferring it to 3 small glass jars:

One jar with the kelp (if you have added it) and red chili pepper:

One jar with the lemon zest and cracked gardenia pod:

One jar with the *yukari* leaves OR *umezu* mixture (see **note** above)



Peel the turnips and cut to look like chrysanthemums. Begin by removing the leafy tops (save these for preparing other dishes). Beginning with the flat surface, take a broad, thin peel over the round top of the turnip. Next, take additional peels to make a 6-sided dome.



Make very fine, parallel slashes. Turn the turnip one-third to the right and repeat to make a cross-hatch design.

Salt the turnip and set aside for a minute until it begins to "sweat." Gently apply pressure to wilt. Rinse off salt.

Repeat to make 6 flowers in all, placing 2 each in the various vinegar mixtures. Cover the top of each jar with clear plastic wrap and tightly seal (below, right). Store in the refrigerator for at least 1 day and up to several months.



When ready to serve, remove from pickling liquid and gently squeeze out excess moisture. Place the flat, un-slit surface on your cutting board and cut through to make 4 segments keeping the original shape. This is called *kakushi-bocho* or the “hidden” cuts that makes it easier to eat but does not interfere with the appearance of the flower. Align each flower, with the flat surface on your open palm. Place your other hand flat over the scored surface and twist to make the “petals” appear to be swirled. Serve as a garnish with broiled fish, chicken or meat.



PANTRY NOTES

Baby turnips are fairly easy to grow. In North America, seeds can be sourced at: http://www.kitazawaseed.com/seed_327_1-179.html

Dried gardenia pods are a natural YELLOW food dye (also used for textiles and yarns/threads). Left, pods on the bush. Center, plucked pods, drying. Right, fully dried. Sold in markets in packages similar to the one below, right.



Aka-jiso leaves are a natural FUCHSIA food dye. Two kinds of *shiso* (below, left), red (*aka*) & green (*ao*). *Aka-jiso* leaves are salted and “bled” to make deep pink-purple liquid. This is used in pickling/tinting plums. The liquid AFTER pickling is called *umezu*, plum vinegar. *Umezu* is sold in bottles; an intense rosy-colored but very salty by-product of pickling plums