

Teapot-Steamed Mushrooms (*Dobin Mushi*) 土瓶蒸し



(Serves 4 to 6.)

Named after the teapot-shaped vessel, *dobin*, in which it is served, this style of steam-poaching traps aromatic vapors, transforming them into an intensely flavored liquid. That broth is then enjoyed with the ingredients that produced it. The vessels are sold at many Asian grocery stores, and are a charming addition to the table. But if you cannot find them (or the space to store them in your crowded cupboard) a similar effect can be had by using 1-cup capacity, porcelain soufflé dishes, covering them with parchment, foil or clear plastic wrap during cooking.

The classic – and most extravagant – combination of ingredients for *dobin mushi* is to pair autumnal *matsutaké* mushrooms with late summer *hamo* eel. The eel, however, is difficult to source outside Japan and requires considerable kitchen skill to prepare properly. Since *matsutaké* mushrooms are wonderful with chicken (and the chicken enhances and enriches the broth, too) this *dobin* recipe calls for it instead of the eel. If you prefer, substitute slices of filleted fish, such as snapper. Or, you could make the dish vegan with just kelp and use a variety of mushrooms to obtain a more complex flavor.

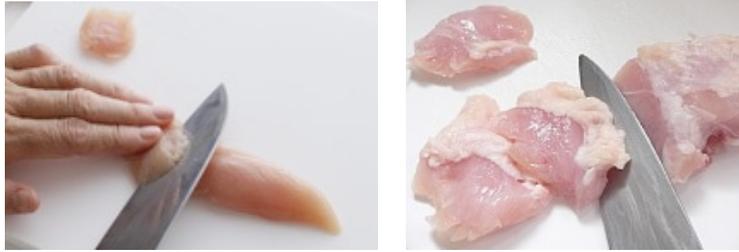
Prepare ingredients and place them in the *dobin* pot:

Begin by lining each of four to six *dobin* pots or soufflé dishes with a small piece of *kombu* (kelp). If you can source a high-glutamate variety such as *Rausu kombu* or *ma kombu*, you will be well-rewarded for your trouble.



Next, **prepare the mushrooms:** One small (half-ounce) *matsutaké* can be stretched into four or more portions. Clean by wiping with paper towel or a clean, soft kitchen cloth. With a knife, cut the mushroom in two about 1/2-inch below the cap. Hand-shred the stem section; slice the cap into thin pieces. Toss with a splash of *saké* to just moisten the mushroom bits and then sprinkle with a pinch of salt. Divide the stem pieces among the dishes, placing attractive cap slices on top of each portion. *Éringi* (king trumpet mushroom) make a less costly alternative to *matsutaké*.

Now **prepare the chicken**: You will need about two ounces of boneless chicken breast to make 4 to 6 individual servings. Japanese markets sell slender strips of chicken fillets called *sasami* but you can substitute about 1/4 of an ordinary boneless chicken breast, sliced lengthwise.



(left) *sogi-giri* cutting of *sasami* (chicken fillet)... (right) boneless breast

Strip away the skin and place the chicken on your cutting board. Holding your knife nearly parallel to the cutting board, slice the chicken into thin, broad slivers (you will want 2 or 3 of these per portion). This cutting technique is called *sogi-giri* or “shave-slicing.” Toss the chicken slices with a splash of *saké* to moisten them and sprinkle with a pinch of salt. Divide the chicken slices among the individual *dobin* pots or soufflé dishes rearranging a few mushroom cap slices to be visible. Add 1 tablespoon of water to each *dobin* pot or dish. Top each portion with a sprig of watercress.

Cover each *dobin* pot with its lid. Or, cover each dish with cooking parchment (tie in place with kitchen twine to insure vapors will not escape) or clear plastic wrap. Do not use foil, as it often imparts an unwanted metallic odor.

Steam-poaching:

Place the individual *dobin* pots or soufflé dishes in a flat-bottomed steamer. Cover and cook for just 2 minutes (begin timing when a steady flow of steam is emitted). With hands protected by potholder gloves or a thick towel, carefully remove the cover of your steamer and remove the *dobin* pots or soufflé dishes from inside.

Set each soufflé cup on a serving dish (much like a cup on a saucer), placing a wedge of *sudachi* lime (Meyer lemons and Key limes also provide fine flavor) to the side. Soy sauce for drizzling should be at the table. Serve immediately.

Eating... Enjoying...



To enjoy, lift the lid of the *dobin* teapot and add a squeeze of lime. Re-lid and pour the broth into the small *saké*-cup that sat upon the lid, upside down, when the dish was first presented. Sip and savor. When ready, lift the pot’s lid again and nibble the tidbits inside.

If you used soufflé cups, rather than a classic *dobin* pot, each person carefully removes the parchment, foil or plastic wrap (unpeel from front to back to savor aromas and protect hands from injury with heat), squeezes some citrus juice over the mushrooms and chicken, and drizzles in a few drops of soy sauce. Begin with a sip of warm broth as you savor the aroma. Then, nibble the mushrooms, chicken and watercress. Finish with the last drops of warm broth.