

## MELON (aspic) KAN

メロン寒



Nothing goes to waste in the KANSHA KITCHEN...

In Japan, melons can be outrageously expensive. Not wanting to waste a single drop of the delicious juice that dribbles out when a ripe melon is cut in half, I created this melon aspic. Using only the “captured” juice, the resulting gel will just hint of melon flavor and aroma. Enjoy the delicately flavored aspic for its smooth, refreshing texture.

For a bolder melon flavor, add honeydew-flavored Midori melon liqueur. Or, add pureed fruit – especially if the melon you have is bruised (many lushly ripe ones are). My recipe below allows for various options.

In the vegan kitchen, *kanten* (a jelling agent known as agar-agar in most non-Japanese kitchens) is used rater than animal-based gelatin. *Kanten* comes in two forms: a stick and a powder. The powder is easier to use and readily available outside Japan; my recipe calls for the powder.

- 1 exceedingly ripe, small melon, about 2 pounds (about 900 grams)
- water (quantity determined by the juiciness of the melon; guidelines for calculating are provided in the recipe below)
- 1 packet *kanten* powder (4 grams/about 2 teaspoons)
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar (this helps set the gel and should not be eliminated)
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice (makes for a “brighter” fruit flavor)
- 1 drop *usukuchi shōyu* (light colored soy sauce) OR a pinch of salt (to balance sweetness)

Optional ingredients:

3 ounces (80 grams) melon; trimmings scooped out after making melon balls

2 Tablespoons honeydew-flavored Midori liqueur; optional





Trim the very top off the stem-end of the melon. Put the melon in a strainer set over a bowl (to catch juice). Slice the melon in half and scrape out the seeds with a spoon. Press against the seeds to extract all the juice. Compost the seeds.

Measure the amount of juice collected; typically a small melon will yield about 1/2 cup. IF MAKING DELICATE, JUICE-ONLY ASPIC... add enough water to make 2 cups liquid.

Place the powdered *kanten* in a small but deep saucepan. Add the 2 cups liquid (juice + water) or melon puree plus the lemon juice and sugar. Stir.

Place over gentle heat and cook the mixture, stirring until it becomes very foamy and begins to rise (that is why you need a deep pot!). Lower the heat to barely a simmer and cook the *kanten* for 1 minute (slightly longer if you need to reduce the total volume). Remove from the heat, add a drop of soy sauce or a pinch of salt if you wish, and stir.

Pour the mixture into individual cups or a single loaf pan to be cut into cubes later. If bubbles form as you pour, lance them or drag them to the sides of the container, drawing them up and out to remove.



***Kanten* will gel without refrigeration.  
*Kanten* should be allowed to “set” before chilling.**

Serve as is, or press on the edges of the gelled mass to loosen it and invert. The inverted surface will be glass-smooth.

OPTIONAL.... MAKING BOLD-FLAVORED JUICE + PUREE ASPIC

Scoop out melon balls reserving them for another use. Scoop out what remains after making melon balls and place these bits in a blender with the collected juice. Blend until you have a smooth puree. If need be, add water to make 2 cups. If you have more than 2 cups, the puree can be reduced later when cooking in the saucepan.

