

Pickles, Condiments and Garnishes

Pickle 1:

Ume vinegar pickle--also show tamari pickle

Pickled tofu

Miso pickles

Talk about takuan and long-salt pickles.

What can you pickle? What are pickles good for?

How long do they last?

What are the principles? Cool and Dry, no mold, water to top, reduce pressure

Condiments:

Gomashio--different ratios for men, women, and children. More or less active. Japan vs. WEstern ratios.

Shio Kombu

Kombu sesame powder--other varieties

Scallion-miso condiment

Show: nori flakes

Tekka

Nori condiment

Talk about carrot top condiment

grated daikon

Garnishes:

Very important to balance taste and to improve aesthetics.

Ideas: parsley, scallion, roasted sesame seeds, lemon slices or rind, shiso leaves, grated ginger, roasted seeds, mint, green nori flakes, nori strips, .

All recipes, with the exception of gomashio and red radish pickles are from Aveline Kushi's Complete Guide to Macrobiotic Cooking, Warner Books, 1985

Tofu Pickled with Miso

Pickled tofu has a soft cheese-like texture and sweet taste and makes a delicious appetizer.

1 pound cake of tofu

1 to 1 1/2 pounds of miso

Spread about a 1-inch layer of miso in bottom of a small bowl or container. Place tofu cake (raw and uncut) on top and spread another 1-inch layer of miso on top and around the sides. cover

bowl with cheesecloth or light towel and let sit 5 to 6 hours or overnight. Just before serving, scrape off miso (and save for other uses) and slice tofu into small cubes or rectangles.

Variation: For a sharper taste, mix 1 tablespoon of grated fresh ginger with the miso before spreading around the tofu.

Miso Pickles

Miso pickles are salty but have a nice sweet taste and give a strong touch to the total meal. They should be eaten only in small amounts. Root vegetables, such as burdock, carrots, daikon, kohlrabi, turnips, ginger, lotus, parsnips, and celery root, are excellent prepared this way.

Traditionally they are first dried in a shady, warm place for about a day until they can be bent in a semicircle. Most of the time, I press them first with a little bit of salt for several hours or a day or two to take out excess water; or I boil them for a few minutes before putting in the miso.

Aging will vary depending upon the type of vegetable and the way it is cut. Thinly sliced ingredients will be done in from 3 days to 1 week. Whole vegetables inserted in miso with slits cut in their skin will usually pickle in 1 to 2 weeks. Vegetables cut into thick rounds will take 3 to 4 months, while whole uncut, un-slitted vegetables can be kept a year or more.

To prepare, wash and scrub the vegetables thoroughly with a brush. Slice to desired thickness and put them in a jar or crock containing miso. The miso should completely cover the ingredients. No weight on the cover is necessary. Store in a cool place until ready.

Green leafy vegetables are difficult to pickles in miso because their high water content. Too much water spoils the miso. Quick boiling or pressing in salt first improves soft varieties.

Red Radish Umeboshi Pickles

The umeboshi plum is an amazing little thing; actually an apricot, pickled with shiso leaves, the umeboshi plum is both salty and sour, and has the wonderful ability to bring the blood back to an alkaline state easily and quickly. Any time I eat white sugar, I follow it later with umeboshi tea, which zaps a lot of the acidity created by the sweet detour. Umeboshi vinegar, the fluid leftover from the pickling process, makes a great seasoning or, in this case, brine for your own pickles.

Every culture eats some kind of fermented food. Whether they're in herring or an olive, the enzymes that are produced by natural pickles are essential to good digestion and absorption.

Note: This recipe can be used with carrots, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, daikon, turnip or any other relatively hearty vegetable. And you can pickle a bunch of vegetables in one jar together.

6 red radishes, washed and thinly sliced

1/2 cup umeboshi vinegar

1 cup spring water

- Place the radish slices in a pyrex cup or mason jar.
- Pour the liquid over them (no matter the amount, this brine ratio is 1 part vinegar to 2 parts water).
- Cover the container with gauze or cheesecloth and secure with a rubber band. Pickles need air in order for fermentation to take place.
- Put the jar in a warmish, unhurried place in the kitchen and let pickle for one day.
- Take out 1/3 of the pickles, rinse them off with a little water, eat some and keep the rest refrigerated.
- After two days, take out some more.
- After three days, remove the remaining pickles. Now you have three different strengths of pickle to satisfy the whole family. Umeboshi pickles are rarely pickled more than three days¹

◇ Makes 12 servings.

Gomashio

Condiments are a big deal in macrobiotics. A great way to get good quality minerals to the blood, they are also an easy way to over salt, which can make a woman tight and irritable. Salt is the strongest agent of contraction in any diet, and because it has a Japanese heritage, the diet leans in the salty direction. The point here being: Go easy on the condiments. Between 1/2 and 1 teaspoon of gomashio a day is ample, and just a tiny sprinkling of the others. Gomashio (from “goma” for sesame and “shio” for salt) is the most popular and regularly used condiment, and it is very easy to make. Crushed sesame seeds, however, go rancid after a couple of weeks, so be sure to make it fresh regularly.

1 teaspoon sea salt

18 teaspoons of sesame seeds (black or tan)

- In a stainless steel or cast iron skillet, roast the sea salt over medium heat. Keep it moving in the skillet and roast it until a) it becomes a sort of an off-white color and b) it emits an ammonia-like smell. This should take about 3 minutes. Place the roasted salt in a surbachi.
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- Rinse the sesame seeds in a strainer and place them in a skillet over medium heat. Move them constantly until they dry off. Reduce heat to low and continue to stir regularly until most of the seeds have popped or have puffed up a little. Be careful not to let them burn.
- In the suribachi, grind the salt with a the surikogi until it no longer has any large granules. It should be a fine powder.
- Add the roasted sesame seeds and grind until about 75% of the seeds are cracked open. This may take about 5-10 minutes of grinding, but the smell is amazing and you can pass it along to kids or others in the kitchen. Everyone likes making gomashio.

Shio Kombu

Shio Kombu means salty kombu and is a popular condiment in Japan. It is traditionally made by rinsing the dust off kombu strips, cutting with scissors into small squares, and soaking in shoyu for 1 to 2 days. After soaking, the kombu is put in a pot with just enough shoyu to cover and cooked over a slow heat without a cover. It is cooked until nearly all the juice has evaporated, 1 to 2 hours, and care is taken to prevent burning. At the end, each piece of kombu is mixed very slowly to coat it with the remaining juice. A few roasted sesame seeds are mixed in at the end. The salty kombu will keep unrefrigerated for over a year. Only one or two small pieces are eaten each time.

For a faster method, soak 5 to 6 strips of kombu, 8 to 12 inches long, for several minutes, or until they are soft enough to cut. Slice into 1-inch squares. Place in a saucepan and cover with a mixture of 1/2 cup of shoyu and 1/2 cup of spring water. Bring to a boil. Cover and reduce the heat to low. Simmer until all the liquid evaporates, about 30 to 40 minutes. Cool off and store in a glass jar.

Sea Vegetable Powders

Dried and powdered sea vegetable condiments are a good way to introduce seaweed into a meal. They are high in calcium, iron, and other minerals besides strengthening to the heart, kidneys and nervous system. Nori and dulse are the lightest, kombu is stronger, and wakame condiment has the saltiest taste.

To prepare, roast either nori, kombu, wakame, or dulse in a 350-degree oven for about 10 to 15 minutes, or until they are dark and crisp, but not burnt. Crush and grind the seaweed in a suribachi until it becomes a fine powder. Use as you would gomashio.

Ground sea vegetable powders may be combined with roasted sesame seeds to make a slightly different condiment. Use about 60 percent seeds and 40 percent seaweed. Be careful to grind the seaweed before adding the seeds or the seeds will be ground too much.

Scallion Miso Condiment

The pungent taste of scallions goes very well with miso, creating a warm energy. Use on rice, other grains, noodles, boiled vegetables, as a spread for bread.

2 to 3 bunches of scallions with roots

1 tablespoon dark sesame oil

3 teaspoons miso

3 teaspoons spring water

Wash the scallions and roots very well. Soak the roots in cold water, if necessary, to loosen any soil. Layer the roots and then the scallions in an oiled frying pan. Form a little hollow in the center of the scallions. Puree the miso with a very small amount of water and pour the mixture into the hollow. Cover and simmer for about 5 minutes. Mix very well when done and serve.

Variation: Five tablespoons of roasted and mashed sesame seeds may be substituted for the oil. A touch of brown rice vinegar, mirin or maple syrup may also be added.

Carrot Top Condiment

2 cups finely chopped carrot tops

1/4 to 1/2 cup spring water

1 teaspoon miso mixed with 3 teaspoons spring water

Put the carrot tops and water into a pot. Add the pureed miso in the center of the greens. cover and cook over low heat for about 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the hardness of the tops. The miso will filter down through the greens.

Variation: Sauté the carrot tops in dark sesame oil for a few minutes. Add a teaspoon of shoyu and a tiny amount of water. Simmer 4 more minutes. Toss with crushed sesame seeds and serve.