

ONIGIRI

METHOD OF MAKING "RICE BALLS"

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Revised: April 9, 2010

Onigiri or rice ball is often called *omusubi*. It may also be called *nigirimeshi*, *musubi*, or *nigiri*. Depending on the region of Japan you are in, will depend on what they may be called.

INSTRUCTIONS | INGREDIENTS

Rice - As long as it's short to medium grain Japanese rice or short glutinous rice, it will have the correct consistency. Specifically *uruchi-mai* which is a medium grain Japanese rice, or sushi rice, is preferred. You may also use *gen-mai*, which is the brown version of *uruchi-mai*.

Rinse/wash your rice prior to use. This will remove any excess starch left over from processing, making the rice less sticky and an overall nicer finished product. A good rule of thumb is to rinse your rice until the water runs clear. Afterwards cook your rice according to packaging instructions.

MAKING ONIGIRI SHAPES

Onigiri was originally made by molding the rice using hands, similar to making hamburger patties. Besides the ball shape other traditional shapes are the flattened round, triangle, and "tawara" or cylinder. You may find it easier to utilize some modern conveniences. You can purchase an onigiri press at specialty shops that cater to Japanese cuisine or online. You can use the corner of a sandwich bag to make "cone-shaped" triangle onigiri or simply use a piece of plastic wrap to assist with making them by hand. If you are not using an onigiri press that makes a consistent size, I suggest using an ice cream scoop to keep your portions equal.

With all methods make sure to have a bowl set aside of warm salt water solution. This is used to clean your hands or utensils during the making of your onigiri. The rice buildup can become very sticky; the salt water solution will help break down the effects of the starch.

OPTIONAL | INGREDIENTS

Nori (1pkg) - Dried edible seaweed sheets. The nori can be wrapped around your formed rice ball for added flavor or aesthetics, also making the onigiri easier to handle (no sticky fingers). Use scissors or knife to cut to desired shape.

Su (1 bottle) - Rice vinegar. Added after cooking rice, I personally use the ratio of 1/3 cup vinegar per 2 cups of cooked rice. Drizzle over and stir/fold rice, making sure not to destroy the texture of the rice. This process should not be done in a metal container; there can be a chemical reaction with the vinegar. I add vinegar not only for flavor but for its antibacterial properties. This allows the onigiri to be at room temperature for a longer period of time.

TRADITIONAL FILLINGS

- ∴ **Shiozake or Shiojake** - salted salmon, grilled and flaked.
- ∴ **Umeboshi** - salty pickled plum.
- ∴ **Tarako** - salty cod roe cooked and cut into small chunks.
- ∴ **Okaka** - bonito flakes mixed with soy sauce.
- ∴ **Umekaka** - bonito flakes mixed with *umeboshi*.
- ∴ **Kombu no tsukudani or Shio kombu** - *kombu* seaweed cooked in a soy sauce based sauce.

For non-traditional fillings, you can use just about anything that is not too watery or greasy.

LINKS | RELATED

Looking At Rice

http://www.justhungry.com/2007/01/looking_at_rice.html

The Onigiri (Onigiri) FAQ

<http://justbento.com/handbook/bento-basics/onigiri-omusubi-faq>

Onigiri On Parade: A guide to onigiri (omusubi) rice ball shapes, types and fun

<http://justbento.com/handbook/bento-basics/onigiri-on-parade-guide-onigiri-omusubi-rice-ball-shapes-types-and-fun>

Aruki Miko of the Known World

<http://yamamura.weebly.com>

Yamamura Kitsune's personal website, access previous handouts and links for reference sites.

Tengusanji: Welcome Back to the Mountain

<http://tengusanji.weebly.com>

Japanese household based in Middle Kingdom that sponsors classes and social events centered on Japanese culture.