

Let's Cook and Eat the Tastes of the Season!

Anago-don (Conger Rice Bowl)

[Ingredients (one serving)]

- 1 grilled anago (conger eel)
- 2 ohba (perilla) leaves
- 1 egg
- Sugar and salt to taste
- Vegetable oil
- 1 bowl rice
- [Sauce] 1 Tbsp sake
- 1 Tbsp mirin (Japanese sweet wine)
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp sugar

[Preparation]

1. Remove the head of the grilled anago and cut the body into 3 to 5 identical pieces.
 2. Cut the ohba leaves into thin strips.
 3. Beat together the egg, sugar and salt. Heat a pot on a stove and pour in some oil. Pour the beaten egg mixture into the pot and gently scramble it on medium heat.
 4. Place another pot on the stove, add the sauce ingredients and mix well. When it comes to a boil, place the cut pieces of anago into the pot and simmer lightly.
 5. Scoop warm rice into a rice bowl, place the simmered anago pieces on the rice, garnish with the sauce, and top with the scrambled egg and strips of ohba leaves.
- ※ Sprinkle Japanese pepper or shichimi togarashi (Japanese assorted spices) to your liking. If ohba leaves are not to your taste, you might find that thin strips of cucumber also go well with the dish.

Although there is still some time until July, we wish to introduce a day in July called *doyo no ushi no hi*, or more accurately, *natsu no doyo no ushi no hi* (Midsummer Day of the Ox). This year, the day falls on July 29. In Japan, it is said that eating unagi eels around this time of year helps overcome the hot summer in good health.

Doyo is a term from the old calendar, and refers to the period of 18 days before the beginning day of each of the four seasons in Japan. It is based on the Chinese zodiac, in which each year and date is represented by an animal. You may have something like this in your country, too. The *doyo no ushi no hi* refers to the day of the *ushi* (ox) during the *doyo* period. In olden times, autumn was considered to begin in early August, so the period preceding that was midsummer. Thus, the custom of eating highly nutritious unagi eel in midsummer to prevent summer fatigue was called *doyo no ushi no hi*. Even today, unagi eels come into great demand during this period.

The unagi eel was originally an excellent and expensive food fish, but poor catches have made it even more expensive in recent years, so much that it is now hard to come by! That is why many people opt for the anago, or conger eel, which is highly similar to the unagi. Anago also comes into season in summer, and is just as delicious as unagi. It also has the same high nutritional value as unagi, but has less fat and is thus lower in calories. The hot summer season may be synonymous with persistent fatigue, but take care to spend each day in good health by enjoying the tastes of the season!

食べよう！ 作ろう！ 旬の味

穴子丼

[材料 (1人分)]

焼き穴子…1本 大葉…2枚 卵…1個 砂糖…少々
塩…少々 油…少々 ご飯…1杯

[たれ] 酒…大さじ1 みりん…大さじ1
しょうゆ おおさとう おお
醤油…大さじ1 砂糖…大さじ1

[作り方]

1. 焼き穴子は頭を取って3～5等分に切る。
 2. 大葉は細切りにしておく。
 3. 卵は砂糖と塩を入れて溶く。鍋を火に掛け、温まったら油をひき、溶き卵を入れて中火でふんわり炒る。
 4. 別の鍋を火に掛け[たれ]の材料を入れてかき混ぜる。沸騰したら1を入れ、少し煮る。
 5. 丼に温かいご飯をよそい、4を掛け、その上から3と大葉を散らせばできあがり。
- ※好みで山椒や七味を掛けます。大葉が苦手な人はきゅうりにしてもよく合います。

少し先の話ですが、7月には「土用の丑の日」(正確には「夏の土用の丑の日」)と呼ばれる日があり、2014年は7月29日です。日本ではその頃にうなぎを食べると夏を元気に過ごせるといわれています。

日本には四季がありますが「土用」とは季節が変わる前の18日間を昔の暦の言葉で言ったもの。また、皆さんの母国にも同じならわしがあるかもしれませんが「十二支」と言って、1年や1日ごとにその年・日に当てはまる動物が決まっています。「土用の丑の日」とは土用の間の丑(牛)の日を指します。昔は8月初旬から秋が始まると考えられていたので、その前の期間は言わば夏の盛りです。その夏の盛りに栄養価の高いうなぎを食べて夏バテを解消しようという習慣が「土用の丑の日」で、現在でもこの頃になるとうなぎが盛んに売られるようになります。

そのうなぎ、元々高級魚なのに、近年は不漁のためますます高価な食材となり、なかなか手が出ません！ という訳で、うなぎに似た魚の「穴子」を食べるのはいかがでしょう。穴子も夏の旬の魚で、うなぎに負けない美味しさです。そしてうなぎと同じように栄養価が高い上に、脂肪分が少ないのでうなぎより低カロリー。疲れがたまると暑い季節も、食卓に季節の味を取り入れて、毎日を元気に過ごしたいものですね。