

Hakusai Cabbage in Cream Sauce

[Ingredients (four servings)]

- 2 chicken thighs
- 1/4 head of hakusai cabbage
- 1 carrot
- 1 pack mushrooms (shimeji mushrooms, etc.)
- 200 ml water
- 1 bouillon cube
- 400 ml milk
- 4 Tbsp katakuriko starch
- Vegetable oil
- Salt & pepper

[Preparation]

1. Chop chicken thighs into bite-sized pieces, and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
2. Cut hakusai cabbage into bite-sized pieces, and the carrot into quarter slices. Also separate the mushrooms into small clusters.
3. Dissolve the bouillon cube in 200 ml of water.
4. Pour a small amount of milk from the specified 400 ml into a cup and dissolve katakuriko starch in it.
5. Heat some vegetable oil in a deep frying pan and lightly bake the chicken thighs.
6. Add the vegetables mentioned in step 2 to the frying pan, followed by the bouillon broth, and heat on simmer.
7. When the vegetables are cooked, pour milk into the pan. When it comes to a boil, season with salt and pepper.
8. Add the katakuriko starch prepared in step 4 to the pan, and simmer until the sauce thickens evenly.

Do you know the term *shiwasi*? It is a term for December in the old calendar, and was used in Japan until around 140 years ago. It literally means "priests run," because December is a month when even priests are busy with a lot of errands to run. Perhaps because the term so adequately describes the busy December month, people often greet each other saying, "It's shiwasi now," even under today's new calendar.

Also under the old calendar, December 22 or thereabouts was called *Tbji*, according to the names of the 24 seasons that were used in China and Japan. It is a day when the northern hemisphere experiences the shortest daytime of the year. On this day, the Japanese have a custom of eating simmered pumpkin and soaking in a bath filled with yuzu citrus, to ward off the coldness and nourish the body.

Above, we introduced a simple yet body-warming dish that is perfect for the busy and cold month of December. It uses hakusai cabbage and not pumpkin, but like pumpkin, hakusai cabbage is also a vegetable that comes into season in winter. You could even add onions and other vegetables to your liking. The New Year holiday season may be an especially busy time of year for people in certain occupations, but there are probably many others who are busy with Christmas parties, year-end parties, and New Year parties. Hakusai cabbage in cream sauce not only tastes good but looks fancy, so we also recommend it as party dish. Have a good New Year, everyone!

白菜のクリーム煮

[材料 (4人分)]

- 鶏もも肉…2枚 白菜…1/4個 にんじん…1本
- きのこ (しめじ等) …1パック 水…200ml
- 固形スープ…1個 牛乳…400ml 片栗粉…大さじ4
- サラダ油…適当 塩・コショウ…適当

[作り方]

1. 鶏もも肉は1口大に切って塩コショウしておく。
2. 白菜は1口大に、にんじんはいちょう切りにしておく。きのこは食べやすい大きさに分ける。
3. 分量の水に固形スープを溶かしておく。
4. 牛乳を分量から少しカップ等に取り、そこに片栗粉を入れて溶いておく。
5. 深めのフライパンにサラダ油をひき、1を入れ軽く焼く。
6. 5に2を入れ、そこに3を入れて煮る。
7. 野菜に火が通ったら牛乳を入れ、煮立ったら塩コショウで味を整える。
8. 最後に4を回し入れてかき混ぜ、全体にまんべんなくとろみが付いて煮立ったら出来上がり。

「師走」という言葉を知っていますか？ 日本では140年前まで使用していた旧暦で、12月のことをこう呼んでいました。先生も走り回るほど忙しい月という意味です。12月になると誰しも忙しさを実感するためか、新暦となった今でも「師走ですね」という会話がよく聞かれます。

一方、これも旧暦で、中国や日本で使われていた季節の呼び名「二十四節気」では、12月22日頃を「冬至」と言っていました。冬至は昼の長さが北半球で最も短い日のことです。この日は、かぼちゃの煮物を食べたり、湯船に柚子を浮かべて入りして、寒さを払い滋養をつける風習があります。

今回は忙しく、そして寒い12月にぴったりの、簡単にできて体も温まる料理を紹介しました。使うのはかぼちゃではなく白菜ですが、白菜もかぼちゃと同じように冬が旬の野菜です。玉ねぎなど他の野菜を加えてもいいでしょう。年末年始はとりわけ忙しくなる職業の人もいるでしょうが、クリスマス会や忘年会、新年会が続いて忙しい！ という人もいるでしょう。クリーム煮は見た目も豪華なので、パーティー料理としてもおすすめです。皆さん良いお年を！