

Japanese Home Cooking

Nanakusa-gayu Rice Porridge for Good Health throughout the New Year

Ingredients (serves 4)

- Nanakusa (seven herbs): *Seri* (Japanese parsley), *nazuna* (shepherd's purse), *gogyo* (cotton weed), *hakobera* (chickweed), *hotokenoza* (nipplewort), *suzuna* (turnip leaves), *suzushiro* (Japanese white radish leaves)
- 1 cup rice • 7 cups water • ash of salt

Preparation

- ① Wash rice and let it soak in water for 30 minutes.
 - ② Place the rice and water in a pot (earthen pot, if possible) and bring to a boil over high heat. Then, reduce the heat and cook over low heat for 40 minutes.
 - ③ When the rice becomes soft, mix in the finely chopped seven herbs and cook briefly. Season with a dash of salt, turn off the heat, cover the pot with a lid and allow the rice to steam for a few minutes.
- ★ In Japan, it is customary to eat *nanakusa-gayu*, or rice porridge with seven herbs, on January 7. It is an old tradition that has its roots in the Heian Period (794-1185). People prayed for good health and longevity by eating young herbs freshly picked at the beginning of the new year. Today, *nanakusa-gayu* is also considered "comfort food," because porridge is good for digestion, especially after spending the New Year holiday eating more than usual.
 - ★ The seven herbs listed in the ingredients are called "*haru no nanakusa*" (the seven herbs of spring). Not many people can recite the names of all seven herbs today, but in the past, people memorized them using rhyme and rhythm.
 - ★ In olden times, all seven herbs grew wild along roadsides and river banks, but many of them have disappeared along with the gradual loss of natural environments in modern years. Today, supermarkets frequently sell the *haru no nanakusa* as a pack during the first week of the new year. Since *nazuna* (shepherd's purse) and *hakobera* (chickweed) are still relatively easy to find, it might be fun to find out what kinds of plants they are and look for them in the fields. If you cannot collect all seven herbs, *shungiku* (garland chrysanthemum), *komatsuna* (Japanese mustard spinach), or other leaf vegetables will do just fine as substitutes.

にほん あじ 日本のおふくろの味

あたらし とし けんこう 新しい年も健康で 七草粥

ざいりょう にんぷん 材料 (4人分)

- 七草…せり、なずな (ペンペン草)、ごぎょう (ハハコグサ)、はこべら (ハコベ)、ほとけのぎ、すずな (かぶの葉)、すずしろ (だいこん葉) 適宜
- 米 1カップ • 水 7カップ • 塩 少々

つく かた 作り方

- ① 米は洗って30分水に浸けておく。
- ② 鍋 (あれば土鍋) に①を入れ、強火にかける。沸騰したら弱火にして40分ほど炊く。
- ③ 米が柔らかくなったら刻んだ七草を入れ、火が通ったら塩で軽く味付けをする。火を止めて蓋をし、少し蒸らす。

- ★ 日本には1月7日に7種の青菜を入れた粥を食べる「七草粥」という風習があります。その歴史は古く、平安時代には既に原型となる慣わしがありました。新春に摘んだ若草を食べて無病息災を祈るとともに、現在では消化の良い「七草粥」をお正月から1週間経ったこの日に食べ、胃腸を休め疲れを癒すという意味合いの行事にもなっています。
- ★ 材料欄にある7種類の植物を「春の七草」と呼びます。最近あまり知る人もいないかもしれませんが、以前は「せり、なずな、ごぎょう、はこべら、ほとけのぎ、すずな、すずしろ、これぞ七草」と調子良く並べて読んで、7種の草の名前を忘れないように覚えたものです。
- ★ 昔は七草のどれもが道端や土手などで採れましたが、自然が失われた近年では難しくなりました。その代わりにスーパーでは「春の七草」がセットになったものがこの時期売られることも多いようです。なずな (ペンペン草) やはこべら (ハコベ) は今でも見つけやすい植物かもしれませんが、どんな草か調べて、野原を探してみるのも楽しいものです。7種類全て揃える必要はなく、しゅんぎくやこまつななどの青菜で代用するのもいいでしょう。