

Japanese Home Cooking

Tsumire-jiru Drive Away the Coldness of Winter with a Nourishing Fish Ball Soup

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 4 sardines • 1 tbsp grated ginger • 2 tbsp *katakuriko* (potato starch) • Salt • 4 cups Japanese soup broth
- Soy sauce • Chopped green onions

Preparation

- ① Fillet the sardines (remove the head, innards, and spine, and peel off the skin).
- ② Chop the fillets into small pieces and mince them well. You could also grind them into a paste using a *suribachi* (Japanese mortar). Add grated ginger, *katakuriko* and salt, and mix well.
- ③ Heat soup broth in a pot. When it comes to a boil, form bite-sized balls of the mixture using a spoon and gently drop them into the soup. The fish balls will float to the surface when cooked.
- ④ When the fish balls are cooked, season the soup with salt and soy sauce. Pour into a bowl and garnish with chopped green onions.

★ *Tsumire* refers to any kind of fish paste that is mixed with starch, shaped into balls, and boiled. The term apparently comes from the combination of the words *tsumamu* (pinch) and *ireru* (place into), because small portions of the fish paste mixture is “pinched off” and “placed into” boiling water.

★ In addition to sardines, *tsumire* is also commonly made from mackerel and saury. However, we introduced sardine *tsumire* in the above recipe, because we will soon be celebrating *Setsubun*, which literally means “the day between winter and spring,” on February 3rd. *Setsubun* is most widely celebrated by throwing roasted beans around the house to drive away evil spirits, but in some regional cities, it is customary to ward off evil spirits by decorating the front door with sardine heads or eating sardines, because evil spirits hate sardines.

★ Sardine, mackerel, saury, and other such blue-backed fish are collectively called *aozakana* (literally meaning “blue fish”). You should eat lots of *aozakana*, as they have high nutritional value and contain large amounts of unsaturated fatty acids that help prevent lifestyle-related diseases such as arteriosclerosis and hyperlipidemia. Filleting a fish may be a challenge, but you do not need to be good at filleting a fish when making *tsumire*, because the fish meat will ultimately be minced. You could also enjoy a simple but well-balanced meal by adding vegetables such as *daikon* radish and carrots to the *tsumire-jiru*. *Tsumire* fish balls are also ideal as one of the ingredients for Japanese *nabe*, or hot pot dishes.

にほん おじ 日本のおふくろの味

えいようまんてん さかなりょうり さむ ふ と 栄養満点の魚料理で寒さを吹き飛ばそう じる つみれ汁

ざいりょう にんぷん 材料 (4人分)

- イワシ 4尾 • おろししょうが 大さじ1
- 片栗粉 大さじ2 • 塩 適量 • 和風だし 4カップ
- 醤油 適量 • ねぎ 適量

つく かた 作り方

- ① イワシを3枚におろす(頭、内臓、背骨を外し、皮も取り除いて身だけにする)。
- ② ①を細かく刻み、ミンチ状にする。刻んだ後すり鉢で更にすりつぶしても良い。おろししょうが、片栗粉、塩を加えてよく混ぜる。
- ③ 鍋にだしを入れて火に掛け、煮立ったら②をスプーン等で一口大にして落とす。火が通ると浮き上がってくる。
- ④ ③に火が通ったら塩と醤油でだしを調える。碗に盛り、刻んだねぎを乗せれば出来上がり。

★ 魚のすり身を、片栗粉等をつなぎに団子状にしてゆでたものを「つみれ」と言います。すり身を「摘まんて」湯に入れる、つまり「摘み入れ」で作るところにその語源があるようです。

★ つみれはイワシだけではなくアジやサンマを使ってもよく作られますが、今回のレシピでは2月3日の「節分」にちなみ、イワシを使いました。「節分」とは冬と春の境という意味で、この日に炒った大豆を撒いて鬼を追い払う「豆まき」という行事を行うことがよく知られていますが、地方によっては鬼が苦手なイワシの頭を玄関先に飾ったり、イワシを食べる風習があります。

★ イワシやアジ、サンマといったような背が青緑色の魚を総称して「青魚」と言います。青魚は動脈硬化や高脂血症といった生活習慣病を予防する不飽和脂肪酸が多く含まれる、栄養的に優れた食品なので、是非積極的に摂りましょう。魚をおろすのは難しいかもしれませんが、つみれは身をミンチ状にするので、きれいにおろせなくても大丈夫。つみれ汁には具にだいこんやにんじんを加えると更にバランスの良い一品になります。また、つみれ団子を鍋物の材料の一つに加えるのもお奨めです。