

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

— Seaweed Miso Soup —

In Japan, people use various types of seaweed as food ingredients, although they seem to be a minority in this respect. Some of the major types of seaweed include wakame, nori, konbu, hijiki, and tengusa, the source of agar, but wakame is by far the most popular seaweed in all of Japan.

Wakame grows in waters along most of Japan's coasts. It germinates in late autumn, grows to about two meters by spring, and withers off by summer. The wakame season is from March to around May, when the seaweed is still young and has a fresh flavor. Sanriku and Naruto are two of the most famous wakame production regions in Japan, but most of the wakame that is marketed today is farmed. Natural wakame has become a rare specialty that is difficult to come by.

Seaweed is rich in minerals and plant fibers. It is extremely healthy, so you might want to include it in your daily diet. In addition to seaweed with vinegar dressing and seaweed salads, wakame rice seasonings are also common, but the most typical seaweed dish is undoubtedly seaweed miso soup.

The wakame miso soup recipe introduced below includes tofu. In place of fresh tofu, you could add other ingredients such as fried tofu, onions, or potatoes, but if you have fresh wakame of the season, you might find that alone may be all you need to enjoy a warm bowl of miso soup.

[Ingredients (two servings)]

Wakame (fresh): 20-30g Tofu: 1/2 block (150-200g)
Water: 400ml Soup stock powder: 1-1.5 tsp (not necessary when using miso that already contains soup stock) Miso: 1.5 Tbsp

[Preparation]

1. If you are using salt-preserved wakame, rinse well to remove the salt. If you are using dried wakame, soak in water until soft. Then, drain well and cut into small pieces.
 2. Cut tofu into 1.5cm cubes.
 3. Heat water and soup stock powder in a small pan until it comes to a boil. Add first the tofu and then the wakame, and reduce the heat to low after the pot comes to a boil again.
 4. Dissolve the miso in the soup and serve.
- ※ Miso that already contains soup stock is very convenient, because all you need to do is dissolve miso in hot water to make miso soup. For a more authentic taste, you could also make your own soup stock by boiling konbu or bonito flakes.

たべよう！ つくろう！ しゅん あじ 食べよう！ 作ろう！ 旬の味

— ワカメの味噌汁 —

世界の中では少数派のようですが、日本は食材として様々な海藻を好んで使う国です。ワカメや海苔、昆布、ヒジキ、また寒天の元となるテングサなどがありますが、中でもワカメは日本中どこでもよく食べられ、非常にポピュラーな海藻となっています。

ワカメは日本各地の海に生息しており、晩秋に発芽し春までに2メートルほどに成熟したあと夏には枯れてしまいます。若くて一番味が良い3月から5月頃がワカメの旬です。三陸や鳴門がワカメの有名な産地ですが、現在市場に出回っている殆どは養殖もので、天然ワカメはなかなか味わえない希少品となっています。

海藻類はミネラルや植物繊維が豊富です。とても体に良い食材ですので、毎日の食卓には是非取り入れてみてください。酢の物やサラダにする他、ご飯にかける「わかめふりかけ」などもあります。味噌汁の中に入ったものを食べるのが最も多いのではないのでしょうか。

今回ご紹介するワカメの味噌汁は、ワカメ以外に豆腐を入れたレシピです。豆腐以外にワカメの味噌汁によく登場する具には、油揚げやタマネギやジャガイモが挙げられますが、もちろん旬のワカメは、それだけを入れた味噌汁にしても美味しいでしょう。

[材料 (2人分)]

ワカメ (生) ...20~30g 豆腐...1/2丁・150~200g 水...400ml
粉末だしの素...小さじ1~1.5 (だし入り味噌を使う場合は不要)
味噌...大さじ1.5

[作り方]

1. ワカメは塩蔵品の場合は水洗いして塩を抜き、乾燥品の場合は戻し、いずれも水を切って一口大に切る。
2. 豆腐は約1.5cm角に切る。
3. 鍋に水と粉末だしの素を入れ中火にかけ、煮立たせる。豆腐、次にワカメを入れ、一煮立ちしたら弱火にする。
4. 3に味噌を溶かし入れたらでき上がり。

※だし入り味噌は湯に溶かせば味噌汁ができるので便利です。またコンブやかつおぶしを煮てだし汁を作ると本格的です。