

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

— Marinated Fried Horse Mackerel (Aji no Nanbanzuke) —

Japanese people love to eat fish, as we introduced in a previous issue of this newsletter, and are the world's third-largest per capita consumer of seafood, according to a certain survey. However, recent years have seen a trend away from eating fish in Japan.

This is not because of any increase in the number of people who do not like fish, but because of an increase in the number of people, and particularly younger people, who feel it is a bother to prepare and cook fish.

Fish have always been a part of the Japanese diet, because Japan is entirely surrounded by the sea, and delicious fish are available year-round. Residing in such a fish-rich country, it is a shame not to eat more fish simply out of reluctance to prepare it. The fish we introduce here is the horse mackerel, or *aji* in Japanese. The seas surrounding Japan are home to various species of horse mackerel, such as *ma-aji* and *muro-aji*. They come into season around May, and are the most delicious at this time of year and certainly worth a try.

Nanbanzuke refers to dishes of fish or meat deep-fried and marinated along with green onions or other vegetables. It is an old Japanese recipe, although for some reason the name includes the term “nanban,” which here means “foreign.” As the ingredients are marinated, the dish keeps well, and even makes fish bones soft enough to eat.

[Ingredients (makes two servings)]

200g horse mackerel (about 8 small pieces)

1 piece chili pepper

1/2 onion

3 Tbsp vinegar

4 Tbsp sugar

2 Tbsp soy sauce

Soft flour or potato starch

Frying oil

Salt

[Preparation]

1. Remove the large bones, gills and innards from the horse mackerel, as desired. If the fish are large, cut them into appropriate sizes, wash well, and drain.
2. Remove the seeds from the chili pepper, slice it in rounds, and place in a bowl along with the vinegar, sugar and soy sauce to prepare the marinade.
3. Cut the onion into thin slices, stir-fry them in oil, and add them to the marinade while still hot.
4. Wipe off excess moisture from the horse mackerel, sprinkle a dash of salt on both sides, and lightly coat them with soft flour or potato starch.
5. Deep-fry the horse mackerel in oil heated to medium heat until crisp, and promptly place them in the marinade.
6. Leave the horse mackerel in the marinade for at least 20 minutes. It is also delicious when chilled in the refrigerator, and keeps for about three days.

た 食べよう！ つく 作ろう！ しゅん あじ 旬の味

— アジの南蛮漬け —

日本人は魚好きで、ある調査では国民1人当たりの水産物消費量は世界第3位、と以前このコーナーでご紹介したことがあります。しかし最近、日本人の「魚離れ」が進んでいるとよく聞くようになりました。

その理由とはというと、魚を嫌いな人が増えた訳ではなく、若者を中心に「調理するのが面倒」と感じる人が増えていることが背景にあるようです。

日本人が魚に馴染み深いのは、国土を海に囲まれていて、いつでも美味しい魚を食べることができるからで、せっかく日本にいるのだから、調理を厭わず魚をもっと食べたいものです。今回ご紹介する「アジ」はマアジやムロアジなど色々な種類があり、日本の周辺を回遊している魚です。5月頃が旬と言われ、今が最も美味しい時期ですので、是非食べてみてください。

料理名の「南蛮漬け」は、から揚げにした魚や肉をネギなどといっしょに酢に漬けた料理の名称です。何故か昔の言葉で「外国」というような意味の「南蛮」が付いていますが、日本に昔からある調理法です。酢漬けにするので日持ちもし、魚の骨も柔らかく食べられます。

[材料 (2人分)]

アジ…200g (小さいもので8尾ぐらい) 唐辛子…1本

たまねぎ…半分 酢…大さじ3 砂糖…大さじ4

醤油…大さじ2 薄力粉または片栗粉…適量 揚げ油…適量

塩…少々

[作り方]

1. アジは、大きい骨や内臓などが気になるようであれば、骨、えらと内臓を取る。大きければ適当なサイズに切り分け、よく洗って水気を切る。
2. 唐辛子は種を除いて輪切りにし、酢、砂糖、醤油と混ぜて漬け汁を作っておく。
3. たまねぎは薄切りにし、油で炒め、熱い内に2に漬ける。
4. 1の表面の水分を拭き取り、両面に塩をした後、薄力粉または片栗粉を薄くまぶす。
5. 4を中温の油でからりとするまで揚げ、すぐに漬け汁の中に入れる。
6. 20分以上漬ければできあがり。冷蔵庫で冷たくして食べても美味しい。3日程、日持ちが効く。