

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

— Sakura-mochi —

In March, forecasts begin to be issued frequently on the news for the eagerly awaited flowering of cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms not only delight the eye, but are used in various designs, sung about in songs, and pickled into edible flowers and leaves. Such uses show the Japanese people's particular fondness for the flower since ancient times.

Pickled cherry blossom leaves are used to wrap sakura-mochi, a traditional Japanese treat that is enjoyed during the cherry blossom season. There are two types of sakura-mochi: the Kanto style, which resembles a crepe; and the Kansai style, which uses a type of rice flour called domyoji-ko. Both offer the characteristic pink tinge of cherry blossoms made by a few drops of red food coloring and the distinctive flavor of cherry blossom leaves. Authentic sakura-mochi is difficult to make, but below we introduce a simple recipe that you could perhaps try your hand at and take along with you when going on an ohanami flower-viewing outing.

[Ingredients (makes 8)]

※The Kanto style has a smooth texture, while the Kansai style has a slightly lumpy texture. We invite you to compare the two, by all means!

[Kanto style]

50g soft flour
50g shiratama flour
1.5 Tbsp sugar
150ml water

[Kansai style]

1 cup mochi rice
2 Tbsp sugar
[Both types]

200g red-bean paste
Red food coloring (optional)
8 pickled cherry blossom leaves

[Preparation]

1. [Kanto style] Put the soft flour, shiratama flour and sugar in a bowl. Mix them together while adding small amounts of water at a time, then add the red food coloring to the batter until it becomes slightly pink. Drop spoonfuls of batter into a frying pan lightly coated with oil at low heat to make 8 oval mochi skins. When the surface dries, turn them over and immediately remove from the pan.

[Kansai style] Mix together the mochi rice, sugar and red food coloring in a rice cooker, pour the same amount of water as when cooking regular white rice, and cook.

2. Divide the red-bean paste into 8 equal portions.
3. Remove some of the saltiness from the pickled cherry blossom leaves by soaking them in water.

4. [Kanto style] Wrap the red-bean paste in the mochi skins.

[Kansai style] Divide the mochi rice into 8 equal portions after it is cooked, wrap the red-bean paste in each and shape them into a round barrel shape.

5. Wrap the mochi with the cherry blossom leaves.

※Pickled cherry blossom leaves should be available at specialty stores that sell ingredients for confections and at large supermarkets. If not, you can enjoy the mochi cakes as they are. They are delicious even without the leaves.

※Red-bean paste is available in cans or plastic pouches and comes in two types: the slightly lumpy tsubu-an and the smooth koshi-an. Choose one to your liking!

た 食べるよ！ つく 作ろう！ しゅん あじ 旬の味

— さくらもち 桜餅 —

3月、ニュースでは日本人がこのほかに好きな花、桜の開花予想がさかんに報じられます。日本では桜は、花を愉しむだけではなく、多く意匠に使われ、歌に詠われ、また花や葉を食用に塩漬けにして使うこともあり、そんなことから古来からの日本人の桜への思いがうかがえます。

葉の塩漬けを使う「桜餅」は伝統的に桜の頃に食べる和菓子です。クレープ風の関東風と、道明寺粉（米粉の一種）を使う関西風の2種類がありますが、どちらも食紅等で色づけされた桜色と、桜の葉独特の香りが特徴的な菓子です。本格的に作るのは大変なので、簡単なレシピをご紹介します。お花見のお供に作ってみてはいかがでしょうか。

[材料 (8個分)]

※関東風は滑らかな食感、関西風はつぶつぶした食感が特徴です。是非食べ比べてみてください。

[関東風] 薄力粉…50g 白玉粉…50g 砂糖…大さじ1.5

水…150ml

[関西風] もち米…1合 砂糖…大さじ2 小豆あん…200g

食紅…微量（無ければ不要） 桜の葉の塩漬け…8枚

[作り方]

1. [関東風] ボールに薄力粉と白玉粉と砂糖を入れる。水を少しずつ加えながら混ぜ、最後に食紅で全体に色を付ける。油をひいてよく拭き取ったフライパンにスプーンで生地を流し入れ、楕円の薄皮を8枚焼く。弱火で、表面が乾いたら裏返し、すぐ火から下ろす。

[関西風] 炊飯器にもち米と砂糖と食紅を入れて混ぜ、通常の白米を炊く時と同じ水加減で炊く。

2. 小豆あんは8等分しておく。

3. 桜の葉の塩漬けは塩抜きしておく。

4. [関東風] 薄皮を2をくるむ。

[関西風] 炊き上がったもち米を8等分し、中に2を包んで丸く俵型に握る。

5. 外側に3を巻けばでき上がり。

※桜の葉の塩漬けは製菓材料専門店や大きいスーパーなどにあると思いますので探してみてください。でも手に入らない場合、使わなくても美味しくできます。

※小豆あんは缶や袋入りのものが売っています。粒あんでもこしあんでも好みでけっこうです。