

“Mochi Madness” Mochitsuki Recipes & Tips!

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Mochitsuki – a Mochi-making event - is a popular Japanese American and Japanese tradition with the sticky rice cakes symbolizing strength, an appreciation for past harvests, and hopes for a prosperous New Year (Oshogatsu). Pounding it the old-school way brings families together and strengthens community in a cultural celebration. Mochi is used for many tasty snacks, soups, desserts, and dishes, some of which we will briefly share here.

A special mochi dessert is **Manju**, often filled with sweet red bean, made in countless artistic designs, colors, and sweet flavors. Manju can be bought at



Striped mochi & persimmon shaped manju dessert

Japanese bakeries called manju-ya like **Osaka-ya**

at 2215 10th St. (at V. St.) in

Sacramento, **Benkyo-do** in San Francisco Japan-Town and **Shuei-do** in San Jose Japan-Town.

Sticky rice dishes are widely popular throughout Asia. You can eat **Chinese jin dui** (sesame seed mochi balls filled with sweet red bean paste), **Filipino babinka** (coconut flavored treats), **Korean Song Paen** (mochi balls with sesame seed filling), or **Thai sticky rice with mangoes** – just to mention a few. They’re all delicious and you can often enjoy them at Asian festivals, restaurants, and food stores.

Many of these “international” mochi recipes are great tasting and fun to try out at home. If you look through Asian cookbooks, you’ll often find interesting “sticky rice” recipes there. You’ll find out that mochi recipes, even for the same dish, sometimes vary tremendously in their ingredients, measures, and cooking steps.



Pounding mochi in Honolulu, Hawaii

Here are a few recipes contributed by friends, church groups, Asian cookbooks and even internet cooking sites. Some are traditional but others use simple & quick cooking methods you can try at home. Check them out!

1. Cooking Sticky (mochi) Rice: From talking to experienced mochi-makers like **Stan Umeda** and participating in traditional mochitsukis, we’ve compiled a few tips on cooking / pounding mochi using huge mallets (kine), stone mortar (usu), and steaming boxes (seriro).

Cooking mochi rice (mochigome) is **very** different from cooking regular rice. Be sure to wash and soak the mochigome (mochi rice) in water about 2 days in advance. This essential step adds the moisture to the rice and makes it cook and stick together as it should.

Cooking it the traditional way requires using a steaming basket (seiro) for about 20-30 minutes. A steamer is highly recommended. You can also use a rice cooker to steam but this is tricky. Some rice cookers allow you to steam rice for the full 20-30 minutes needed. Other rice cookers will require you to sprinkle water over the top about 3 times to keep steaming for the full 20-30 minutes.

2. Practical Tips on Pounding Mochi:

- Sand smooth the faces and handles of the wooden mochi mallets (kine). This will help prevent sticking and accidents.



Traditional stone or wooden mortar (usu), mallet (kine), and steamer (seiro).

non-stick Pam on them.)

- **Heat the usu with boiling water** between batches before inserting the mochi. This will prevent the mochi from cooling and hardening before it can be pounded fine. (You can try Pam here also.)

- First **mash the mochi** into a lump before actual pounding. Several people can use the head of the mallet to mash, not pound, the mochi - using their body weight rather than just arm strength. Mashing it down into a lump gets a quick jump on pounding the mochi and prevent it from flying through the air.

- Some people use wooden sticks to **first mash the mochi** together. In a Japanese American twist, some families use **baseball bats**. These are easier to handle than the kine mallets and some people use the sticks exclusively rather than pounding.

- Next **pound the mochi**. Try the easier way lifting the mallet close to the head and letting the weight of the falling mallet do some of the work. Some people use one pounder at a time. More experienced pounders and turners can do two. Three is tough.

- Some people **turn the mochi** by hand wearing a light, cloth stretch glove covered by a latex glove. This will help prevent burns.

- When **transferring the mochi** to a cutting table, use a wooden board covered with potato starch (katakuriko), mochiko flour, or cornstarch to prevent sticking. Watch out since it's hot.

*** Note:** Mochi cakes may be kept frozen for months well-sealed in plastic freezer bags. You can thaw by microwaving it 1-2 minutes in a bowl covered with plastic wrap, roasting in a toaster oven, or boiling in water.

- **Soak mallets** in water a day in advance. This will both help seat the mallet heads on the handles and cut down on the mochi sticking. (Also, try spraying

3. Mochi Machines: In more recent years, many people have purchased mochi machines that cook the mochi rice and even form it into mochi. This gives you mochi without a lot of work, but also lacks much of the family/ community get-together.

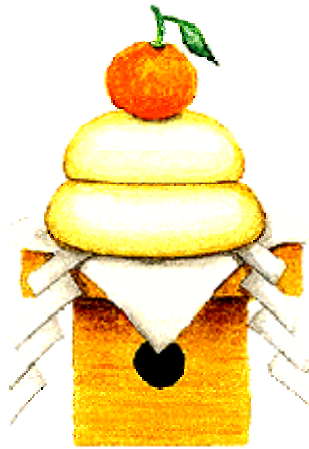
4. Easy Microwave Mochi (Mochiko mochi flour): For those looking for a quick and easy snack at home, you can “cheat” and make it in the microwave. Based on a recipe from “**Generation to Generation: A Family Cookbook**” from the Orange County Buddhist Church:

1 package (10 oz) mochiko (mochi rice flour – no pounding and used in many modern recipes)
2 cups water

Mix mochiko and water well in a bowl. Pour into a greased baking dish covered with plastic wrap.

Cook on high for about 10 minutes. Remove by

running a knife around the edge and take out of pan to cool. You can cut it into pieces, roll it into balls, or freeze in plastic freezer bags.



Kagami or kasane mochi: The two mochi stacked with tangerine (dai dai) on top symbolize wealth, harmony, a stable foundation, and a family's continuity from generation to generation

50 / 50 mixture is tasty. Some people like kinako on fresh gooey mochi. That way the kinako sticks and you get lots of flavor. You can also cut up and moisten your stored mochi, spoon kinako on, cover bowl with plastic to steam, and microwave it.

6. Fumie's Daikon-Oroshi Nori Mochi: Fumie Shimada's family likes to eat mochi this way. Here's what you need.

Fresh / soft mochi, microwave softened mochi, or toasted mochi

Finely grated daikon (Japanese radish)

Soy sauce (shoyu)

Ajitsuke nori (flavored dried seaweed sheets).
 Pour soy sauce over the grated daikon, add mochi, wrap in ajitsuke nori, and enjoy.

7. Andy's Ginger Shoyu & Sugar Mochi: Here's what you need for this recipe:

- ½ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup white sugar
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- Fresh grated ginger root (about 1 teaspoon).
- 1 tablespoon sake (Japanese rice wine).
- A shake of cayenne or Japanese pepper (togarashi) mixture (if you like it a little spicy)

Add ingredients together, boil till sugar is dissolved, and enjoy hot or cold. The sake adds flavor with the alcohol boiling off. Some people swear you have to bake the mochi in a toaster oven until brown and puffy then dip it into the mixture. In the old days on the farm, people toasted the mochi cakes on the iron toves to perfection.



Japanese Americans making mochi in a World War II internment camp: An enduring community tradition

Place napa, daikon, and mochi into soup to cook and soften. Top with sliced kamaboko and nori.

8. Easy Crockpot An Recipe (sweet azuki red bean paste): This is the recipe used by the **Buddhist Church of Florin's Women's Association (Fujinkai)** for its An mochi. If you have ever made An the original stovetop way, you know it takes hours and hours. An expert mochi-maker, **Twila's mom Kikue Tomita** (San Jose), was amazed at how easy this recipe turns out.

Soak 1 pound of azuki beans overnight in water. Put into 3 qt. crockpot. Add 4 cups boiling water. Cook on high for 6-7 hours or overnight on low until beans are soft enough to squeeze with fingers. Drain and then cool the beans by spreading them out in a large container. Put azuki in blender or Cuisinart food processor and puree until smooth (**koshi smooth style**) or to a desired texture if you like it lumpy (**tsubu bumpy style**). Pour into a large microwaveable container like a 9 x 13 baking dish. Add 2 1/4c sugar. Mix well. Microwave for 20 minutes. Stir well. Microwave for another 20 minutes or longer until it is the dryness you like. Makes 5 cups of an.

*** Note:** You can also buy An fully prepared from Asian food stores.

9. An Mochi: Using freshly made mochi, roll a ball about golf ball size in your hand. Flatten out. Roll a ball of an in your hand about large marble size (**Fumie Shimada** says you can use a melon-



Women forming mochi cakes in Japan

7. Ozoni (New Year mochi soup): This is the traditional 1st Japanese meal for the New Year.

- Dashi (fish based) soup mix or chicken broth
- Kamaboko (fish cake)
- Napa cabbage
- Thin slices of daikon (Japanese radish)
- Toasted Nori (dried seaweed sheets)
- Pieces mochi (fresh, microwaved, or toasted)

Mix up dashi or chicken broth according to directions. Cut napa and daikon into small pieces.

baller for this). Insert into the warm mochi. Cover and shape into a ball, then flatten into a 3” patty.

10. Zenzai (hot azuki bean soup with mochi):

This is popular dish for New Years when families make mochi and is a great winter treat.

- 1 cup azuki beans (about 8 ounces)
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- Mochi

Soak azuki beans overnight. Drain water. Boil then simmer covered in about 1 1/2 quarts of water (replenishing as needed) for 1 - 2 hours until beans are soft [you can also use boiling water and crock pot high 6-7 hours or crock pot low overnight]. Add sugar and salt and cook for about another 1/2 hour on stove (or crock pot high). Mix cornstarch with 3 tablespoons of water then add to azuki to thicken soup. Serve hot azuki beans over fresh, boiled, microwaved, or toasted mochi.

11. Chinese Jin Dui (sticky rice balls with red bean and sesame seed): There are many Chinese dishes using sticky rice, called **nau mai fan** in



Chinese Jin Dui sesame balls

Chinese. The fluffy sweet white mochi is called **bok tong go** and **jung/dung** is made of sticky rice containing Chinese

sausage (lob cheong), egg, and veggies, wrapped and steamed in leaves. Jin Dui is a favorite and comes in many variations using different ingredients. Below is one that is based on the An Mochi recipe (#9 above).

Start with fresh An Mochi. Wet with water and then roll in roasted sesame seed (goma). Deep fry in oil until golden brown.

12. Korean Song Paen (rice cake with sesame seed filing): This is a Korean sweet rice-style

dessert recipe shared by **Mrs. Grace Kim** of Long Beach, formerly of Davis.

- 1 box sweet rice flour (mochiko 10 oz).
- Pinch of salt
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- Filling:
 - 1/3 cup ground sesame seed
 - 1/8 cup (2 oz) sugar
 - 2 tsp water

Bring water and salt to a boil. Add to rice flour in a mixing bowl and knead. Shape into 1 inch balls and make a hole in each. Mix the filling ingredients and put about 1/2 tsp into each ball. Place into a steamer for 10-15 minutes. Lightly coat with sesame oil.

14. Filipino Bibinka (baked coconut) Mochi:

This recipe is a baked treat that is a cross between mochi and a pound cake. It’s based on a recipe from **“Favorite Island Cookery”** by the Hawaii Buddhist Church.

- 1 cup white sugar and 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 3 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1 box mochiko (10 oz.)
- 1 block melted butter or margarine
- 5 whole eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 12 oz coconut milk
- 1 cup milk

Mix dry ingredients and then add wet ingredients. Grease a 9 x 13 inch pan and pour in batter. Bake for 1 hour at 350 degrees. Slice and eat. Ono!

15. Thai Sticky Rice with Mangoes: This is a popular rice pudding–like dessert from Thailand and similar to other recipe variations in Southeast Asia. This recipe is based on one from **Authentic Vietnamese Cooking: by Corinne Trang.**

- Coconut milk (about 14 oz).
- 1/3 cup sugar.
- Mochi rice
- Fresh mangoes

Start with fresh-cooked mochi rice (not mochiko flour) without any pounding. Boil the coconut milk and then add the sugar until dissolved. Peel and slice the mangoes into wedges and place on top of the sticky rice. Pour about 1/2 cup of the coconut milk mixture over the top. Some recipes recommend serving warm. Makes four desserts.