

ちらしずし

(Chirashi-zushi = scattered sushi)

In celebration of Hina Matsuri, this issue of the Shinbun features Chirashi-zushi, a dish that is commonly served not only for this very special Girls' Day celebration, but on other festival days in Japan as well. Why this particular type of sushi is associated with Girls' Day is not clear, but I suspect that the reason maybe two-fold.

First, it is a very colorful dish with a variety of bright, festive colors brought out by the strips of egg omelet, sashimi-grade salmon and shrimp, pea pods and other seasonal ingredients. Secondly, it is considered to be a sushi dish relatively easy to prepare at home, unlike the kind found in restaurants requiring the theatrical assembly of a professional sushi chef. Given that it does not take a lot of time to prepare—and many of its components can be prepared days in advance—mothers and daughters can enjoy themselves decorating their rooms with Hina dolls and peach blossoms and playing games and activities associated with this day.

There are unlimited variations of and regional differences in Chirashi-zushi. Here is just one version; other recipes can be found at such sites as <http://japanesefood.about.com/od/sushi/r/chirashizushi.htm> and <http://www.globalgourmet.com/food/kgk/0999/chirashi.html>. Try making some yourself—even if you aren't a girl! And...have a happy Hina Matsuri!

Ingredients:

- slightly less than 2 c Japanese-style or short-grain rice
 - slightly less than 2 c water

Ingredients for sushi rice seasoning (sushi-zu):

- 1/3 C rice wine vinegar
- 2 T sugar
- 1 t salt

Topping Ingredients:

- 1 piece slightly salted (or smoked) salmon
- 1 T saké
- 1 cucumber
- 1~2 T white sesame seeds
- thin omelet (3 eggs, 1 T sugar and 1 pinch of salt)

Preparation:

1. Prepare the sushi rice according to the recipe on p. 3.
2. Put 1 T saké on salmon and microwave for 3 minutes. Peel the skin and discard it. Crumble the cooked salmon.
3. Cut the cucumber into thin strips.
4. Beat the three eggs and mix in the sugar and salt. Cook the omelet in a very thin sheet, and cut into julienne strips.
5. Mix in cucumber, salmon, sesame seeds with the sushi vinegared rice. Serve in a shallow bowl garnished with thin strips of omelet.

Serves 4.

Sushi-rice

Ingredients:

Ingredients for sushi rice seasoning (sushi-zu):

- slightly less than 2 c Japanese-style or short-grain rice
- 1/3 C rice wine vinegar
- 2 T sugar
- slightly less than 2 c water
- 1 t salt
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Preparation:

1. Put the rice in a bowl and wash and rinse it with cold water. Repeat until the water becomes clear.
2. Place the rice in a pan or rice cooker and add water. Adjust the amount of water to just cover the rice.

Let it soak for 30-60 minutes.

3. If you are cooking the rice in a pan, cover the pan with a lid and bring it to a boil over high heat.
4. Once the water boils, turn the heat down to low and cook for about 15-20 minutes or until the water is almost gone.
5. Remove the pan from the heat and let it steam with the lid on for 10-15 minutes.
6. In the meantime, prepare the sushi vinegar (sushi-zu) by mixing the rice wine vinegar, sugar, and salt in a small pan. Cook over low heat until the sugar dissolves. Let cool.
7. Transfer the cooked hot rice onto a large plate or baking sheet.
8. Sprinkle the vinegar mixture over the rice and fold the rice quickly with a spatula, being careful not to smash the rice.
9. To cool and give the sushi rice a shiny look, use a fan as you mix the sushi rice. It is best to use the sushi rice immediately.

[Sources: http://japanesefood.about.com/cs/rice/ht/ht_japaneserice.htm;
<http://japanesefood.about.com/od/sushiforbeginner/r/sushirice.htm>]