

山芋なます

SWEET VINEGARED MOUNTAIN YAM

YAMA-IMO NAMASU

Preparation time: 45 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Pickling time: 1 hour

Serves: 4



- 1 thin mountain yam (7 oz/200 g), scrubbed
- 6 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 4 tablespoons hon mirin
- 1 teaspoon flaky sea salt
- 2 dried shiitake, soaked in ¼ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) hot water for 20 minutes
- 1 tablespoon shoyu
- 1 small Japanese cucumber (2½ oz/75 g), cut crosswise into thin rounds
- 1 small carrot (2½ oz/75 g), scrubbed and finely julienned

There are several varieties of mountain yam, but notably two distinct shapes are widely available: *Yamato imo* looks a bit like a clubbed foot, whereas *naga imo* (long yam) resembles a daikon in shape. Typically, *yamato imo* is used for grating up to a deliciously slimy mass, while the long yam is best cut into pieces and pickled or cooked. Use the long-shaped mountain yam for this recipe. And be sure to wash your hands and forearms with warm, soapy water immediately after handling this itchy root vegetable.

Peel the mountain yam, quarter it lengthwise, and slice crosswise into quarter-rounds 1¼ inches (2 cm) thick. Drop the pieces into a medium bowl and fill with cold water to cover.

In a small saucepan, bring the vinegar, 3 tablespoons of the mirin, and ½ teaspoon of the flaky salt almost to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from the heat and stir to dissolve the salt. Cool to room temperature.

Drain the mountain yam, place in a medium bowl, and toss with the cooled vinegar/mirin solution. Weight with a plate and another object on top to keep the mountain yam submerged

for 1 hour. (Alternatively pack in a heavy-duty resealable plastic bag and roll up to squeeze out all the air.)

Reserving the soaking water, remove the shiitake, cut off the stems, and thinly slice the caps. Slide the slices into a small saucepan and add the soaking water and the shoyu and remaining 1 tablespoon mirin. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook for 5 minutes to soften.

In separate bowls, massage ¼ teaspoon of the salt into the cucumber and the remaining ¼ teaspoon into the carrot. Let each sit for 10 minutes before rinsing quickly with cold water and patting dry on a clean tea towel. Drain the shiitake.

Remove the weight from the mountain yam and stack the yam in the bottom of four small bowls. Spoon the cucumber into the bowl on one side of the yam and the shiitake on the other side. Arrange a pinch of the carrot across the top of the yam and serve as a cold composed salad. (Alternatively, toss all of the ingredients together in a medium serving bowl and serve family-style or in small bowls.)



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