

Kana's Ozoni Soup

Serves 4 | 30 minutes prep + 30 minutes cook time

Kana Hinohara Hanson from Fulamingo shares her mother's recipe for Ozoni, a traditional soup of vegetables and mochi in broth. Mochi has been associated with good fortune in Japan for hundreds of years, and is often eaten during celebratory occasions. Traditionally eaten on New Year's Day, this warming, satisfying soup is thought to bring good luck for the coming year.

2 quarts dashi (we used Riken brand, one pouch makes one quart of dashi, so we used two pouches. Any instant dashi will do, or you can make your own dashi from scratch.)

1/2 lb boneless skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of fat and cut into 1" pieces

1 fat carrot, about 6" long, peeled and cut into half-inch disks

1 daikon radish about 6" long, peeled and cut into half-inch disks

1 tablespoon soy sauce

2 tablespoons Sake, divided

1/4-1/2 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vinegar (distilled white, rice vinegar, or whatever you have on hand that's similar)

8 large shrimp, peeled and deveined

1 bunch of spinach

Some ice, for ice baths to chill blanched ingredients

8 slices Kamaboko (Japanese fish cake), Optional

4 mochi squares or circles

Step 1 Marinate the chicken: Trim the fat and cut the chicken thighs into 1" pieces. Place into a bowl and add 1 Tbsp. sake. Marinate for 10 minutes.

Step 2 Make dashi: Bring 2 quarts of water to a boil, then stir in two packs of Riken instant dashi powder. One could totally use their own home-made-from-scratch dashi broth, but we like the convenience of instant dashi here. It turns out great!

Step 3 Cook the chicken: Add the chicken to the dashi and cover the pot. Boil until cooked through (about 5 minutes), skimming the fat that rises to the surface. Use a slotted spoon to pull the chicken from the broth and set aside. Leave the dashi broth on the heat.

Step 4 Cook the daikon and carrot: Bring the dashi broth you used to boil the chicken and bring it back up to a boil with the lid on. Add the daikon. Blanch for 8 minutes (or until fork-tender). Use a slotted spoon to pull the daikon from the broth. Repeat this blanching process for the carrot.

Step 5 Finish the soup broth: Measure off 1 quart of the dashi poaching-broth into a storage container. Add 1 Tbsp. soy sauce, 1 Tbsp. sake and a pinch of salt to season. This is the finished soup broth! You can save the remaining poaching liquid that you didn't season and use it later on to make more broth if you have leftover chicken or veggies. You can also use it to make miso soup, or blanch other veggies. (Dashi-poached veggies are so delicious!) You can freeze it, or keep it in the fridge for a week.

Step 6 Cut the blanched vegetables: If you have the Japanese vegetable die-cutters, use them to cut fun shapes out of your blanched daikon and carrot disks. Otherwise cut each of the blanched disks into quarters. Set aside.

Step 7 Cook the shrimp: Bring a pot of water to boil and add 1 tsp. vinegar. Poach the shrimp for 2 minutes (or until cooked through), and then immediately place them into a bowl of ice water. Once they are chilled, set them aside.

Step 8 Blanch the spinach: Bring another new pot of water to a boil, and then blanch the spinach in it in, in small batches, about 40 seconds per batch. Put each batch into an ice bath to stop it from cooking. Strain the chilled spinach out from the ice bath.

Step 9 Squeeze and cut the spinach: If you have a sushi-rolling mat, here's where you use it. Otherwise you can also do this part by hand. Arrange the blanched spinach leaves so that they are more or less all bunched up parallel, leaf to stem, in one 6" long rod-shaped stack. Squeeze the moisture out of the stack, while forming the spinach together in a sort of "spinach log". Once the log is formed, cut it cross-wise into four 1.5" pieces. Take care not to break apart the cut-spinach "disks" and set them aside.

Rana's Ozoni Soup cont. — To Serve

Ozoni can easily be prepared in advance, up to 2 days. Just store your finished seasoned broth, blanched chicken, carrots, daikon, spinach-disks, and cooked shrimp, in separate containers in your fridge. In Japan, it's important to not work/cook/clean on New Years Day so it's customary to prepare these components the night before so you just have to assemble and warm the soup next day. When you are ready to serve, follow these steps

1. Take all the veggies and proteins out of the fridge and let them come up to temp a little bit. 15-20 minutes should suffice.
2. Heat the broth in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Ideally you want the broth to be just-before boiling.
3. While the broth is heating, cook the mochi. If you have a grill pan, toast them over medium high heat until they are browned and expanding. If you don't have a grill pan, you can also cook the mochi for about 5 minutes in a toaster oven or oven. If you're using a toaster oven or oven, place the mochi on tin foil for easy clean up.
4. In the meantime, arrange the ingredients you cooked ahead of time into your serving bowls in cute little piles. We put one spinach disc, two shrimp, two kamaboko slices, and 3-5 pieces each of chicken, daikon and carrot into each bowl.
5. Once the mochi is cooked and the broth is hot, place the mochi in the bowl and gently pour one ladle-full of broth over everything. Your Ozoni is ready! Itadakimasu!