

ST. HELENA FARMERS' MARKET

Miso Soup with Mushrooms and Potatoes

Cindy Pawlcyn

Cindy's Backstreet Kitchen and Mustards Grill

I eat miso soup for breakfast at least 1-2 times a week. Traditionally it is served at the beginning or ending of a Japanese meal. All of the ingredients can be found at Sunshine Market in St. Helena, mostly in the Asian food section.

For variation you can substitute daikon radish, peeled and diced for the potato. A handful of spinach can be added with the miso and cooked until just wilted.

Dashi is the all-purpose soup stock and seasoning in Japanese cooking. There are instant mixes but I prefer it made fresh.

Makes 4 servings

Dashi (soup stock)

- 7-8 inches of Kombu (dried kelp), rinsed
- 8 cups fresh water
- 1½ handful Katsuo (dried bonito flakes)

1. Set up a strainer over a large bowl lined with cheesecloth or linen.
2. In a large pot add the Kombu to the water and bring just to the boiling point. Do not boil.
3. Add the Katsuo and turn off heat. When the Katsuo sinks to the bottom (you can help it a bit) strain it through the cheesecloth into a large bowl and set aside.
4. Dashi can be prepared in advance, refrigerated and used at a later time.

Miso Soup

- 4-5 cups dashi (see recipe above)
- 1/4 of a large leek, cleaned and diced
- 1 medium yellow fin potato peeled and diced or a light colored sweet potato peeled and diced
- 1 scallion minced
- 5-6 small fresh shiitake mushrooms quartered or dried shiitake mushrooms reconstituted in hot water, drained and cut into thirds
- ½ block silken or firm tofu, diced into ½ inch cubes
- tablespoon wakame (Japanese dried seaweed flakes), soaked in hot water to hydrate, drained and minced - optional
- 1-2 tablespoons sake or mirin (Japanese cooking wine)
- 4-5 rounded tablespoons. shiro miso (white miso)
- 1-2 tablespoons sesame oil

- 5 scallions, white parts thinly sliced
1. In a medium-sized pot sauté the mushrooms and the leek in the sesame oil over medium heat. Add the dashi, sake or mirin and potatoes and cook until the potatoes are tender. Add the tofu and heat through. Add the wakame (optional).
 2. In a small bowl, soften the miso by adding 3 tablespoons of the hot broth stirring with a whisk until fully blended. If you put the miso directly into the stock it will not blend in and the soup will be granular.
 3. Gradually ladle the blended miso into the soup and simmer over medium heat but do not let it boil, boiling will change the flavor.
 4. Ladle into individual bowls distributing the ingredients equally. Garnish with the sliced scallions.