

Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan

Issue No. 9

Oitokoni ♦ **Kochi Prefecture**

By CGJNYJIC

Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan is a series introducing the history and food culture of various Japanese locales through their unique *kyodo-ryori* – timeless regional cuisines made with local ingredients and techniques.

The 9th issue introduces *oitokoni* from Kochi Prefecture. Read on to learn more about this hearty dish!

What is Oitokoni?



Kochi Prefecture's *oitokoni* is a stewed dish of mixed ingredients, which often includes *satoimo* (taro root), carrots, daikon radishes, *abura-age* (fried tofu), and azuki beans. A variation of the local dish *itokoni*, *oitokoni* is a *shojin-ryori*, a Japanese Buddhist cuisine. The dish was said to have been first made on the day of Buddha's passing and has been prepared as an offering ever since. Cooked in a large pot to serve many at a time, it is the perfect dish for a chilly day.



Kochi Prefecture

Located in the southern section of Shikoku, the arch-shaped Kochi Prefecture borders Ehime and Tokushima Prefectures to the north. While Kochi boasts the largest area on the island of Shikoku, 84% of the land is mountainous forestry, and it is also home to the Shimanto River, the last pristine river in Japan.

Kochi Prefecture is also known as the origin of the renowned Yosakoi Festival, held every August since 1954 when they were started to enliven its towns. The number of participants for this summer fiesta has rapidly grown from the first festival of 750 dancers to about 20,000 performers at present. Aside from the beautiful landscape and traditional matsuri festivals, Kochi Prefecture is also



the birthplace of many historical figures, such as Sakamoto Ryoma, a hero from the final years of the Edo period and John Manjiro, a prominent translator who worked between the United States and Japan. Visit Kochi, and you will be able to relish a mixture of nature, culture, and history.



Shojin-ryori

Japanese *shojin-ryori* is a Buddhist cuisine that is said to have arrived from China during the Kamakura period (1185-1333). Following the Buddhist principle of



"non-violence towards animals," it is a diet free of meat, fish, and eggs. Some regions and sects may additionally prohibit the consumption of pungent ingredients called the "*gokun*," which consists of root vegetables such as onions, green onions, garlic, chives, and leeks. This sophisticated cookery is also



allegedly credited with further expanding soybean usage in recipes, as vegetable-only meals would lack protein. Originally designed for monks, *shojin-ryori* gradually spread to the common people and is now enjoyed by many—Buddhist or not—and has gained attention worldwide as a vegetarian dish. The religious cuisine also plays a role in the Japanese food culture of cultivating gratitude as a reminder to appreciate the blessings from nature's bounty.



Oitokoni

This recipe is by Chef Yasuhiro Shima of the CGJNY Ambassador's Residence.

Ingredients

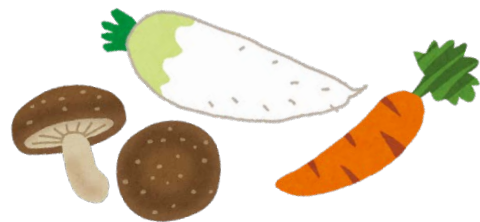
makes 3~4 servings

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Donko shiitake mushroom | 3 |
| Azuki beans | 30g |
| Satoimo (taro root) | 100g |
| Carrot | 90g |
| Daikon radish | 90g |
| Atsu-age (thick fried tofu) | 100g |
| Burdock root | 50g |
| Kombu dashi | 900ml |
| *Shiitake mushroom broth | 180ml |
| *From step 1 in Instructions | |
| Sugar | 30g |
| Soy sauce | 3 tbs |



Instructions

1. Soak the donko shiitake in 180ml of water overnight. Reserve the soaked water as broth. Boil the azuki beans once, then boil again from water over low heat to remove excessive scum.
2. Chop the satoimo, carrot, and burdock root into bite-sizes.
3. Rub salt onto the chopped satoimo and rinse well to remove sliminess.
4. Cut the daikon radish into bite-size square chunks and the shiitake into quarter pieces. Slice the atsu-age into preferred size.
5. Combine all of the kombu dashi, 180ml of the shiitake dashi, and 30g of the sugar into a pot.
6. Add all of the cut ingredients except the azuki and turn the heat on. Once thoroughly cooked, add the soy sauce and the azuki beans and simmer for about 15 minutes on medium heat.



Itokoni throughout Japan

Itokoni is a local cuisine eaten widely throughout Japan, with unique variations found by regions. The name presumably derived from a play on words, starting from the term *oi-oi*, meaning "gradually," from the cooking process of adding the ingredients bit by bit into the pot. The word *oi* by itself means "nephew," and the relationship between *oi-oi*—two nephews—would be cousins, which in Japanese is *itoko*. Add the *ni*, which denotes the method of boiling or simmering, and voilà, the name *itokoni*. Although the most popular and commonly known ingredients for *itokoni* are the kabocha squash and azuki beans, recipes without the use of those ingredients are also popular, such as the *oitokoni* introduced in this issue. One can find another distinctive form in Yamaguchi Prefecture, a soup-like *itokoni* with shiratama dango. Miso-flavored versions can also be found in northern parts of Japan. The different types of *itokoni* indicates each region's culture, history, and background. Be sure to try and compare the distinctive *itokonis* if you ever have the chance!



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