

KOHAKU SUBASU
(Red & White Pickled Lotus Root)

紅白酢蓮



The colors red and white are symbols of felicity in Japan. Accordingly, foods that are red and white have an especially festive feel to them. At the Japanese table, the color “red” can be a wide range of hues from orange (carrots) to ruby-red (raw tuna), to the heliotrope shades of pinky-purple you see here.

The vivid pink you see above is due to the natural coloration of *aka-jiso* leaves used to pickle and preserve *uméboshi* plums. These leaves after being salt-rubbed and bleed are wonderfully aromatic and have the added bonus of discouraging growth of bacteria in the foods pickled with them. In this recipe, the pickled *aka-jiso* leaves tint and scent crisp slices of lotus root. These slices make a wonderful garnish for grilled fish or meat; the slices are classically used to top pilaf-like arrangements of *chirashi-zushi*. **Red & White Pickled Lotus Root** can dress up any salad.

Makes about 75 slices

Clear Sweet-and-Sour Sauce (*Amazu*):

1 cup *su* (rice vinegar)
1/3 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1-inch piece *kombu* (kelp)

Pink Sweet-and-Sour Sauce (*Beni Amazu*):

1 cup *umézu* (plum vinegar)
1 cup sugar
1-inch piece *kombu* (kelp)

NOTE: *umézu* is VERY SALTY! It is the by-product of salt-preserving plums. If you can source salt-preserved, *aka-jiso* leaves that bleed deep pink, add them to the jar. Adjust with additional sugar, if necessary to balance the saltiness.

renkon (fresh lotus root), about 6 to 8 ounces
2-3 tablespoons *su* (rice vinegar) + 2 cups cold water to soak *renkon*
2-3 tablespoons *su* (rice vinegar) + 2 cups cold water to blanch *renkon*

In a non-reactive pot, mix the Clear Sweet-and-Sour Sauce ingredients and bring to a simmer, stirring; cook until the sugar and salt is melted. Let the sauce cool in the pot before transferring it to a glass jar with the piece of *kombu*. In the same non-reactive pot, mix the Pink Sweet-and-Sour Sauce ingredients and repeat the procedure, transferring the pink sauce to a separate glass jar with its own piece of *kombu*.

Kombu mellows the sharpness of the vinegar and acts as a “lid” to protect the top surface of finished lotus root slices.

Peel the *renkon* and cut it into very thin slices. Use a stainless steel blade to prevent discoloration. Immediately soak the slices in the vinegar and water mixture to prevent further discoloration.

Mix a fresh batch of vinegar and water in a pot lined with a non-reactive material (glass, teflon, ceramic) and bring it to a rolling boil. Drain the soaking *renkon* slices and blanch them in the second vinegar and water mixture for 1 minute, or until barely tender and slightly translucent. Drain. DO NOT refresh under cold water.

Divide the slices between the two jars, placing the piece of *kombu* on top of the slices. Be sure there is enough *amazu* sauce to completely cover the lotus root in each jar. Depending upon the size of your slices, a squat shallow jar or tall narrow one may be more suitable.

When completely cool, arrange the *kombu* in each jar to act as an inner lid. Before screwing on the jar top tightly, place clear plastic wrap between jar and cap. Store in the refrigerator for at least 1 day and up to several months.

「海の精 紅玉梅酢」

Umi no Sei (brand)

Benitama Umézu



Uméoshi with aka-jiso leaves