

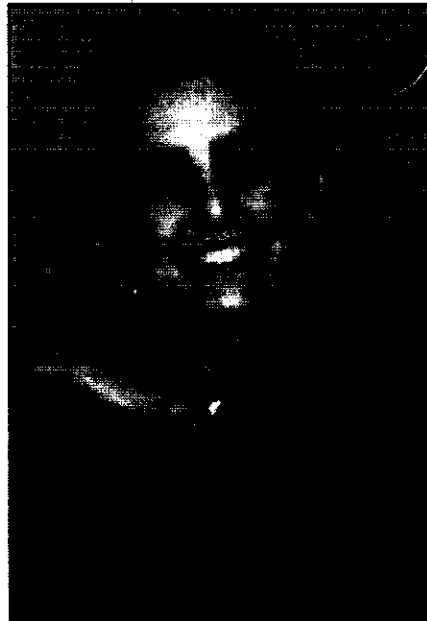
## Mucho About Mochi

Cynthia Briscoe

Years ago a Japanese acupuncturist friend was somewhat shocked and amazed when I adapted a well-loved quiche recipe by substituting tofu for the eggs and cheese, something that never would have entered her mind. Tofu was tofu. Macrobiotic cooks are like that, though, adaptable, versatile, and creative. Mochi is mochi, right? Wrong!

In the search for something gooey and chewy, and vaguely cheesy perhaps, with the right seasonings mochi can be another one of those traditional Japanese foods that can be adapted to new uses. Traditionally, mochi was made from cooked sweet rice pounded to make a sticky mass of rice. Small cakes were formed from this and rolled in various flours or toppings. Often they adorned shrines as offerings and were served and eaten during various ceremonies and celebrations.

Today mochi can be purchased in your local health food store, in a flat cake located in the refrigerated section or sometimes in the frozen foods section. Modern mochi has come a long way from the traditional cakes dusted with soybean flour or dipped in sweetened aduki



beans. Mochi can now be purchased in a spectrum of flavors ranging from plain, mugwort, sesame garlic, seaweed, cinnamon raisin, and recently even chocolate, hemp seed, or pizza. However, beware: some of the more exotic flavors have sugar added.

Mochi is concentrated energy. Traditionally-made mochi, intensely pounded by hand, was more highly energized than our typical health food store variety, which is ground

through a machine. But even this modern variety is energizing. Cornelia Aihara once told me that if a nursing mother eats mochi, she and her child will “stick together” and remain close throughout life. I had to laugh because it was a hot humid day in Kansas, and it did literally feel like my infant daughter and I were two pieces of merged melted mochi. Herman said that eating mochi develops patience because it must be well chewed. Along that same thought, Herman also said, “If you don’t have patience, you will become a patient.” And you know those big guys, the sumo wrestlers in the funny shorts? They eat mochi to maintain their size, strength, and stamina.

I don’t know too many of us who are destined to become sumo wrestlers, but in today’s heated, fast-paced world, taking time to chew some mochi can have its benefits. Cultivating patience is an antidote to a stressful lifestyle. The better we chew, the better our digestion, and the steadier our blood sugar metabolism becomes, which helps in the even-tempered department and stress-management control area. Mochi is a great snack for kids

since it's quick and easy to prepare. It's high energy food for athletes, people wanting to gain a little weight or muscle mass, and as support food for those engaged in physical labor.

Simply prepared, many people most often cut mochi into squares, put it on a cookie sheet and bake it until it puffs up. For some this is the only way they have ever prepared mochi. However, the baked, hard, and dry quality of mochi prepared like this can be defeating for a person with hypoglycemic tendencies. Mochi can be prepared simply in many more ways. For example, mochi can be cut into squares and lightly pan fried (or fry the whole block and then cut it), first on one side until golden, then flipped, covered with a lid and cooked on the other side. Again, exercise patience in cooking mochi. It doesn't like to be rushed or to be cooked with too high of a flame or heat. Exercise gentle cooking skills and let it do its thing, which is to melt in the inside and become a little crispy on the outside. Try using a medium-low heat and once the skillet becomes hot, slip a heat diffuser under the pan. Cover with a lid to ensure that the heat penetrates the dense interior.

Mochi squares may also be cooked in a waffle iron for a delectable snack or breakfast item. Cooked plain, sesame, or mugwort mochi keeps good company served with a drizzle of soy sauce, some sliced green onion, and a little mound of grated daikon. Daikon is always a welcome friend to aid in the digestion of dense or fried foods. With some of these tips, mochi can be easy to digest and give you energy to last.

Following are a few recipes David and I have developed, some by accident and some by "one thing leads to another." Beyond baked mochi squares, I hope you'll enjoy these adaptations of a trusted and fa-

vorite food friend in a macrobiotic kitchen. Discover the nature and texture of mochi and soon you'll be creating delicious dishes you and your family and friends will enjoy chewing together during dinner.

## DOMED CAULIFLOWER MOCHI

**1 large head of cauliflower**  
**1 package of plain mochi, grated**  
**2 Tbsp tahini or sesame butter**  
**2½ Tbsp soy sauce**  
**1½ Tbsp ume su water**

1. Bring 1½ inches of water to boil in a pot large enough to accommodate the whole head of cauliflower.
2. Turn the head of cauliflower over and trim the discolored end off the stem. With a small paring knife, remove the cauliflower core by cutting out an inverted cone shape. This helps the cauliflower cook evenly throughout.
3. Place the cauliflower in the boiling pot of water and cover with a lid. Cook over high heat for 6 to 10 minutes or until a bamboo skewer will pass through the cauliflower.
4. Mix the grated mochi, tahini, soy sauce, and ume su. If the mixture is dry and loose, add a small amount of the cauliflower cooking water so it will hold a shape when squeezed in the palm of your hand.
5. Place the cauliflower in a covered casserole, round side up.
6. Press the mochi mixture in an even layer over the dome of the cauliflower.
7. Place covered in the oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes until the mochi melts together.
8. Serve.

## STOVETOP MOCHI PEAR MELT

**5 ripe Bosc pears, sliced into 1/8" slices (about 6 cups sliced)**  
**½ cup unfiltered apple juice**  
**1 package cinnamon raisin mochi**  
**pinch of sea salt**

1. Place sliced pears in the bottom of a LeCreuset pot or a cast iron skillet.
2. Add the apple juice and sprinkle with a pinch of salt. Mix.
3. Cover the pot with a lid and simmer the pears until soft.
4. Slice the package of mochi into quarters and then slice each quarter block of mochi into two slices half the thickness.
5. Remove the lid from the pot and lay the pieces of mochi on top of the pears.
6. Return the lid to the pot and cook covered over low heat until the mochi melts.
7. If more than ¼ inch of apple juice remains in the bottom of the pot, remove lid and cook down apple juice.
8. Serve while it is still warm.

### Options:

1. Mix about ¼ teaspoon cinnamon into pears.
2. Add ¼ cup of raisins to the pears.
3. Garnish with coarsely chopped roasted almonds.

## GOOEY AND CHEWY ROOTY TOOTY VEGGIES

**1 package mochi (plain, mugwort, or sesame)**  
**1 Tbsp sesame tahini**  
**2 Tbsp soy sauce**  
**Rooty Tooty Veggies**  
**1 to 2 tsp sesame oil**  
**5 soaked shiitake mushrooms, caps**

- cut into triangular pieces
- 1 burdock root, sliced into ¼ inch diagonal slices (if thick) or 1½ inch logs if it's a thin root
- 1 to 2 onions sliced in 1/4" crescents
- 2 to 3 carrots, cut into ¼ inch diagonal slices
- 1 to 1½ level tap sea salt

1. Sauté the rooty tooty veggie ingredients in a heavy skillet or Dutch oven in the order listed.
2. Slice 1 package of mochi in the following manner: Cut the square into fourths. Stand each piece on edge and slice in half thickness-wise. Lay each eighth flat and cut into thirds.
3. Add ¼ inch of shitake soaking water to the bottom of the pot of sautéed vegetables.
4. Evenly distribute the slices of mochi over the top of the vegetables.
5. Place a heat diffuser under the pot and reduce heat to low. Cover with a lid. Continue cooking until the mochi "melts."
6. Remove the lid and drizzle the sesame tahini and soy sauce over the top of the mochi
7. Cover the pot and continue cooking another 5 minutes.
8. Serve while hot.

## VEGETABLE MISO SOUP WITH MOCHI SQUARES

- 2 cups daikon, turnip or rutabaga cut into bite sized pieces
- 1 onion, cut into thin crescents
- 1 ear of corn, kernels removed from the cob, save the cob for soup stock
- 4 inch piece of wakame, soaked and finely cut
- 4 cups water
- 1 heaping Tbsp barley miso, or to taste
- ½ package of mochi cut into four pieces

- 1 green onion, cut into thin diagonal slices for garnish
- Sesame oil

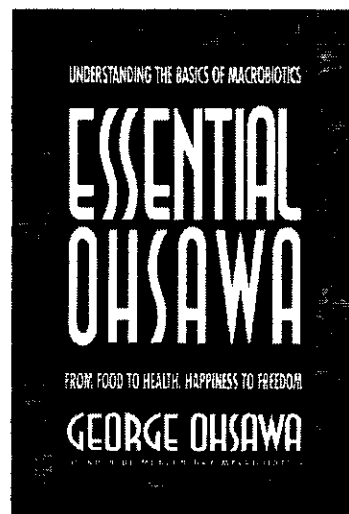
1. Place onion, corn cob, daikon or other root vegetables, and corn kernels in layers in a soup pot.
2. Add just enough of the four cups of water to cover the vegetables.
3. Bring to a simmer.
4. Cover pot and cook vegetables until tender.
5. Remove lid and add the remaining water.
6. Return to a simmer.
7. While the soup is cooking, add a thin layer of sesame oil to a skillet. Fry the mochi pieces until crispy on one side. Turn over and cook on the other side until crisp and cooked all the way through. Drain on paper towels.
8. Dip out a little soup stock into a bowl and mix in the barley miso until the miso is dissolved.
9. Add the wakame pieces and the soaking water. Cook over low heat for 3 to 5 minutes.
10. Add the dissolved miso paste and shut off heat.
11. Allow to rest for 5 minutes
12. Remove corn cob and serve garnished with a few pieces of green onion slices and pan-fried mochi squares.

*Cynthia Briscoe enjoys the artistic side of life, including the creativity of macrobiotic cooking. She was the head chef and co-owner of The Amber Waves Cafe in Kansas City. From 1991-1998 she taught macrobiotic cooking at The Vega Study Center with Cornelia Aihara. She is the co-Founder of Macrobiotics America. Cynthia lives with her five children and husband in Northern California. For more information: [www.macroamerica.com](http://www.macroamerica.com) or [cynthia@macroamerica.com](mailto:cynthia@macroamerica.com).*

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