

BUTTERNUT SQUASH AND MUSHROOMS ON JAPANESE RICE

INGREDIENTS

5½ oz. (160 g) Japanese
koshihikari rice
8 tbsp. sesame
or coconut oil
2 garlic cloves, thinly
sliced
1 tbsp. coriander seeds
1 tsp. Aleppo pepper
1 tbsp. paprika powder
1 heaped tbsp. unrefined
sugar
1 lb. 4 oz. (580 g) butternut
squash, peeled and cut
in ½ in. (½ cm) slices
1 in. (3 cm) fresh ginger,
grated
4½ oz. (130 g) button
mushrooms, cut in ½ in.
(½ cm) slices
salt, pepper
2 spring onions, finely
sliced
a splash of ponzu sauce

Returning from a long trip, I always feel an unbridled enthusiasm at the idea of coming back to French produce with a fresh eye. In these in-between moments, cooking feels special; you're still filled with the foreign tastes of your trip while being comforted to rediscover ones you may have been taking for granted. More than trying to accurately recreate dishes I've eaten—an often disappointing path—I try to revisit or make up new ones loosely inspired by what I've just experienced. They tend to start as simple, almost naïve, constructions, but the good ones will slowly morph into full-fledged dishes that accompany us for years.

I can't say I've specifically eaten butternut squash with rice during a recent trip we took to the Japanese countryside, but every time I make this recipe, the smell of the rice cooking, the bright orange of the squash, and the dainty spring onions take me back there again.

Rinse your rice until the water runs clear. Leave it to soak until ready to cook (10–30 minutes) while you peel the vegetables.

Heat up 4 tablespoons of oil in a non-stick pan on medium-high heat. Add the garlic, coriander seeds, Aleppo pepper, and paprika. When the garlic is turning slightly golden, add the sugar, butternut squash, and ginger. Mix with a wooden spatula to coat with the fragrant oil. Add salt and pepper. Cover and leave to cook for 10 minutes, checking regularly. The squash should start to brown.

Add the mushrooms, mix, add the remaining 4 tablespoons of oil, cover again, and cook for 15 minutes. The squash should be tender but not broken down and the mushrooms slightly caramelized.

While the squash and mushrooms finish cooking, put your rice to cook in a saucepan. If it has soaked, adding one and a half its volume of salted water should be enough. Cover and cook for 10 minutes. If it's ready before the squash, leave it in the saucepan with the lid on so it stays moist.

When ready to eat, divide the rice in two bowls and top with the cooked squash and mushrooms and sprinkle with the spring onions. Add a splash of ponzu sauce to each bowl and enjoy.

Ponzu sauce is a citrus-based (often yuzu) soy sauce found in Japanese stores. Like soy sauce it keeps for months in the fridge. If you don't have it on hand, use regular tamari sauce mixed with a bit of lemon juice.

SERVES 2 AS A MAIN

SOAKING TIME 30 MINUTES PREPPING TIME 15 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 20 MINUTES

