

How to make Mochi at home

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RICE (Mochigome)	Cups (Japanese cups)	5	6	7	8	9
WATER in bottom of mochi machine	CC	360	380	400	400	420

Prepare and Cook the Rice

1. Wash and drain the mochigome (Japanese glutinous rice) in cool water until the water runs clear. Cover the mochigome with cool water and soak for 12-24 hours (I made 5 cups).
2. When ready to make mochi, drain rice through a strainer.
3. Pour water into well of machine. Be sure that the gasket is wet also. Insert the pan, turning until it sets. Mount the impeller until it stops moving.
4. Put the well-drained rice into the pan, lightly leveling the top by hand. Cover and press the steam button.
5. When steaming is complete, the buzzer will sound (about 35-45 minutes). Turn off, remove cover and can test rice by pressing a grain between the fingers. If grains can be crushed, it's ready to pound. Press pound button.
6. Allow the rice to pound for about 10 minutes or until smooth. Pounding too long will make the mochi too soft.

Prepare the Work Surface

1. Sprinkle katakuriko (potato starch) through a sieve onto the work surface and on the pan (lined with parchment paper). The mochi machine comes with a plastic pan to dump the mochi rice into after pounding but I usually don't use it.

Form the Mochi Pieces

1. When mochi is done pounding, turn off the machine. Using hot mitts, twist out the pan from the machine. Turn the pan over and allow the mochi to come out of the pan. Remove the impeller.
2. Dust your hands with katakuriko and lightly dust the mochi as you work so it doesn't stick to your hands. The less you use, the better. If you use too much, it will incorporate into the mochi, making it taste flour-y (is that a word?).
3. Quickly work the mochi so it's smooth on top. Portion off a small amount of mochi, using the left hand as a "cutter" by pinching the mochi between the side of the thumb and forefinger. Use the right hand to "break" the portion of mochi off. Set the mochi with the "cut side" down. If done well, it will be easier to shape the mochi. There is a machine available to cut the mochi into consistently sized pieces if desired.
4. Gently momu (knead/massage) each mochi piece so that it's round and smooth. The mochi should be massaged so that the mochi is not completely flat. I use my cupped right hand and flat left hand to gently coerce the mochi into a slightly mounded piece. Set each mochi piece onto the ko-floured parchment paper. The seam should be on the bottom. Due to the heat of the mochi, it will gradually flatten a little bit after setting down.
5. Finish making the rest of the mochi pieces. When there are more people working the mochi table, the "cutter" will just keep cutting and setting it on the table for others to mold into shape.
6. Heat before eating. Mochi will keep for 2-3 days at room temperature. Can be refrigerated or frozen.

Kagami Mochi

Many people make kagami mochi for the family altar at New Years. This is made with a larger piece for the bottom and smaller piece for the top. Using both hands on the sides of the kagami mochi, the mochi is gently shaped to be taller with straighter sides than the regular mochi. Each of these pieces are shaped while on the work surface until cool enough to maintain the shape when you stop working with it.

Family History

Our family (Komoto/Kato/Taketa) has made mochi between Christmas and New Year for as long as I can remember. The rice used to be washed in wooden baskets and steamed in hand-made wooden boxes over a fire. My aunt, Lily Komoto, who was usually the "cutter", taught me how to cut. After the mochi was finished, we would toast the mochi over an old wood stove. Mmmm. The machines and methods have changed over the years but we still try to keep up with the tradition in some form. In about the early '90s, in order to preserve some traditions for the kids, we decided to return to the traditional method of pounding with mallets and a stone usu, with the help of my dad, James Komoto.