CULINARYORIGIN / JAPAN

茶碗蒸し (Chawanmushi)

# Chawanmushi - Japanese savoury egg custard with dashi



Own image (AI-generated)

**JAP-013 | 4 small starter portions | Difficulty 3/5**

Approx. 30 min with cooled dashi; 75-90 min with freshly made dashi

Washoku / Steamed starter | Japan; nationwide, with a historic tradition in Nagasaki

# Before you cook

## Authenticity and sources

Chawanmushi is a delicately steamed, savoury egg custard. This version follows Japan's Hattori cookery school: two eggs to 350 ml dashi, with usukuchi and traditional fillings. Stirring without incorporating air, straining and gentle steaming preserve its silky texture. Usukuchi keeps the custard pale; it is not a reduced-salt soy sauce. The historic restaurant Yossou describes earlier forms in Kyoto and Osaka and their later spread to Nagasaki. This is not a reconstruction of Yossou's own recipe.

## Timing and preparation

Allow about 30 minutes with prepared, cooled dashi, prepared prawns and cooked ginkgo: cut the fillings, strain the egg mixture, fill the cups, steam over high heat for 1 minute and gently for 10-12 minutes, then check doneness. Fresh dashi also needs soaking, heating, straining and cooling; allow roughly 75-90 minutes in total. Check the actual doneness before serving.

# Ingredients (metric)

## Egg custard mixture

| | |
|---|---|
| 100 g | Egg, without shell (2 eggs) - Approximate shopping weight. The piece count in brackets applies to the original quantity (4 portions). |
| 350 ml | Prepared, unsalted kombu-katsuo dashi, cooled |
| 2 g | Fine dry salt |
| 2.5 ml | Usukuchi shōyu (薄口しょうゆ) |
| 2.5 ml | Hon-mirin (本みりん) |

## Fillings

| | |
|---|---|
| 50 g | Chicken tenderloin (sasami / ささみ; 1 piece) - Approximate shopping weight. The piece count in brackets applies to the original quantity (4 portions). |
| 40 g | Small prawns, peeled and deveined (4 pieces) - Approximate shopping weight. The piece count in brackets applies to the original quantity (4 portions). |
| 20 g | Fresh shiitake, tough stems removed (2 small mushrooms) - Approximate shopping weight. The piece count in brackets applies to the original quantity (4 portions). |
| 20 g | Kamaboko (かまぼこ; 4 small fan-shaped slices) - Approximate shopping weight. The piece count in brackets applies to the original quantity (4 portions). |
| 16 g | Cooked, drained ginkgo nuts (ginnan / ぎんなん水煮; 8 pieces) - Approximate shopping weight. The piece count in brackets applies to the original quantity (4 portions). |
| 4 g | Mitsuba (糸三つ葉; 4 stems with leaves) - Approximate shopping weight. The piece count in brackets applies to the original quantity (4 portions). |
| 2.5 ml | Usukuchi shōyu to lightly coat the chicken and prawns |

### If making dashi from scratch - a small batch

| | |
|---|---|
| 500 ml | Water - Only for making dashi from scratch; use 350 ml of the batch. Do not also buy prepared stock. |
| 5 g | Kombu - Only for making dashi from scratch; use 350 ml of the batch. Do not also buy prepared stock. |
| 10 g | Thinly shaved katsuobushi - Only for making dashi from scratch; use 350 ml of the batch. Do not also buy prepared stock. |

## Method

### 01 Prepare the dashi

Soak the kombu in the 500 ml water for 30 minutes. Heat and remove it before the water reaches a rolling boil. Take the pan off the heat, add the katsuobushi, leave to infuse for 2 minutes and strain finely. Measure out 350 ml and leave to cool. Skip this step if using prepared dashi.

### 02 Cut the fillings

Remove the tendon from the chicken and cut it diagonally into thin pieces. Prepare the prawns; lightly coat both with the soy sauce reserved for marinating. Halve the shiitake on an angle, cut the kamaboko into fan shapes and roughly chop the mitsuba.

### 03 Make a smooth custard mixture

Mix the salt, usukuchi and mirin into the dashi. Stir the eggs without making them foamy, incorporate the dashi and pour through a sieve. Remove any visible air bubbles.

### 04 Fill the cups

Distribute all the fillings evenly and slowly pour in the egg mixture. Leave a little space below the rim of each cup.

### 05 Steam gently

Set a steamer insert over boiling water. Put the cups in place and leave the pan lid slightly ajar. Steam over high heat for 1 minute, then over low heat for 10-12 minutes.

### 06 Check for doneness

Check the centre with a wooden skewer: clear liquid should emerge rather than cloudy egg mixture. The custard should remain tender. The chicken and prawns must be cooked through; continue steaming over low heat if necessary. Serve warm. The thickness of the cups and the depth of the filling affect the actual cooking time.

# Archivist’s notes

Usukuchi: look for 薄口・淡口しょうゆ. A pale colour does not mean less salt. Chinese ‘light soy sauce’ is a different category. Higashimaru Usukuchi provides a relevant manufacturer reference; no European retailer has yet been verified and no affiliate link is active for it.

Japanese fillings: look for kamaboko in the chilled or frozen section, specifically pre-cooked ginkgo nuts, and mitsuba at a Japanese food shop. Kamaboko is steamed fish paste; mitsuba is not coriander.

Four small starter portions in heatproof cups holding about 180-200 ml. The dashi ingredients are an alternative to prepared stock: use 350 ml of the batch, rather than buying both sets of ingredients.

Piece weights are approximate shopping guidelines. Hattori does not specify the amount of soy sauce for marinating; this version allows 2.5 ml usukuchi. Mirin is specified as hon-mirin and dashi as unsalted kombu-katsuo dashi. Times are planning estimates; this recipe has not been test-cooked by us.

### Alternatives usable in Europe

Chicken breast can replace the tenderloin; a suitable sachet of unsalted Japanese dashi may be used after checking its label. Flat-leaf parsley can replace mitsuba in Europe, but changes the flavour. Seek out usukuchi specifically for this example in the soy sauce guide.

# Nutrition

No nutritional calculation has been carried out.

| Nutrient | Per 100 g | per small starter portion |
|---|---|---|
| Energy | not calculated | not calculated |
| Fat | not calculated | not calculated |
| Carbohydrate | not calculated | not calculated |
| Protein | not calculated | not calculated |
| Salt | not calculated | not calculated |

# Documented sources

Source references and access dates are carried over from the reviewed archive. This English edition does not claim new source checks or an in-house cooking test.

### 01 Hattori cookery-school recipe

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 02 Yossou

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 03 MAFF: 茶碗蒸し

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 04 Kikkoman: 基本の茶碗蒸し

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 05 Kikkoman: 茶碗蒸し

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 06 Kikkoman: Japanese measuring spoons

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 07 Japanese salt information centre

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 08 Japan Soy Sauce Association

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

### 09 Higashimaru Usukuchi

Japanese | Accessed 22 September 2026

Open original source

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