RECIPE

Kenchinjiru

A Japanese Buddhist-temple lunch soup of taro, daikon, carrot, burdock and tofu in a kombu and shiitake dashi, served over a little brown rice.

MAKES

4 servings US Metric

TOTAL

1 h 15 min

Ingredients

- [ ] 1 piece dried kombu (4 inches square, about 5 g)
- [ ] 4 dried shiitake mushrooms
- [ ] 5 cups water
- [ ] 2 cups peeled taro, cut in ½-inch slices
- [ ] 2 cups peeled daikon, cut in quarter-rounds
- [ ] 2 medium carrots, peeled and cut in half-rounds
- [ ] 1 cup burdock root, scraped and thinly sliced in 1-inch pieces
- [ ] 1 tsp grated fresh ginger
- [ ] 300 g firm tofu, cut in ¾-inch cubes
- [ ] 2 tbsp lower-sodium soy sauce
- [ ] ¼ tsp salt
- [ ] 3 medium scallions, sliced
- [ ] 2 tsp toasted sesame oil

Method

1. Wipe the kombu with a dry cloth; do not wash off the white powder. Put it in a large pot with the shiitake and the 5 cups of water. Let it sit 30 minutes, or overnight in the fridge.

2. While it soaks, scrape the burdock with the back of a knife, slice it thin, and rest it in cold water for 5 minutes, then drain. Peel and slice the taro and rinse it under the tap. Cut the daikon, carrots and tofu as listed.

3. Set the pot over medium heat. When tiny bubbles rise around the kombu, about 10 minutes, lift the kombu out and throw it away. Lift out the shiitake, squeeze them over the pot, cut off the stems, slice the caps thin and put them back.

- [ ] 2 cups cooked brown rice, cooked without salt, for serving

4. Add the taro, burdock, daikon, carrots and ginger. Bring to a boil, skim off the foam, then turn down to a gentle simmer with the lid cracked. At 5,300 ft water boils near 203 °F, so give the roots about 25 minutes instead of 20. They are done when a knife slides into the taro with no push.

5. Add the tofu and simmer 5 minutes more, until it is hot all the way through. Stir in the soy sauce and salt. Take the pot off the heat and stir in the scallions.

6. Put ½ cup of rice in each of four bowls. Ladle the soup over and around it, then drizzle ½ tsp sesame oil over each bowl. Eat the soup first and the rice after.

7. Cool leftovers in shallow containers within 2 hours, then refrigerate. Reheat to a boil, stirring, or to 165 °F. Keep the rice apart if you plan to freeze the soup.