

September 15, 2009

Cookbook Tester: Japanese Hot Pots

By Sarah DiGregorio



Salmon hot pot--made with arctic char

One of the only good things about summer's passing is the arrival of soup season. Just in time, [Japanese Hot Pots: Comforting One-Pot Meals](#) by Matsuri chef Tadashi Ono and writer Harris Salat comes out a week from today.

Japanese hot pot, or nabemono, is different from the Chinese sort that you might be thinking of, for which the table receives a bubbling bowl of broth in which each person cooks bits of meat and vegetables (although, in that same vein, shabu-shabu is considered a kind of nabemono). Japanese hot pots are simply quick-cooking soups that are served from a communal vessel in the center of the table, usually on a hot plate to keep it warm. The various ingredients in the soup--often vegetables, tofu, fish, and/or meat--should be arranged beautifully in the broth, like a [liquid bento box](#).

Japanese Hot Pots is a wonderfully comprehensive cookbook, featuring hot pots from all over Japan, to every taste--from Kyoto mackerel-miso hot pot and Hiroshima oyster hot pot, to Hakata pork intestines hot pot and lamb shabu-shabu from Hokkaido.

The recipes are very simple once you're done finding the ingredients and cutting them up. There's basically only one technique going on--simmering. Procuring the ingredients might be more difficult, but we found every single item called for at Sunrise Mart (4 Stuyvesant Oval). JAS Mart would also be a good bet.

Click through for the salmon hot pot recipe, which, for sustainability reasons, is best made with wild Alaskan salmon or (more affordably) arctic char.

Salmon Hot Pot

Ishikari Nabe

Yield: 4 servings

Adapted from [Japanese Hot Pots](#)

Harusame are transparent noodles made of mung bean or potato starch. Negi resemble giant scallions--Ono urges readers to find the variety called Tokyo negi, available at Sunrise Mart. If you can't get your hands on them, substitute two large scallions for the one negi. Shungiku leaves, which can also be found at Sunrise Mart, are in the chrysanthemum family and have a strong, slightly bitter taste. Sansho is in the same family as Sichuan peppercorns, and has a similarly aromatic, citrusy flavor.

4 cups dashi (see recipe below)

3/4 cups shiro miso

1/4 cup mirin

1 medium Spanish onion, cut crosswise into 1/2-inch thick slices

1/4 small head green cabbage (about 1/2 pound), cut into bite-sized pieces

2 medium Idaho potatoes (about 1 pound), peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices

1/2 (1/2 pound) package firm tofu, cut into 4 pieces

1 ounce harusame, soaked in water for 15 minutes

1 negi, sliced on an angle into 2-inch pieces

3 1/2 ounces (half of a 200-gram package) enoki mushrooms, trimmed, and pulled apart

4 ounces shiitake mushrooms (about 8 mushrooms), stemmed

1 pound salmon fillet, halved lengthwise, and sliced into 1/2-inch-thick pieces

2 cups shungiku leaves, stemmed

1 tablespoon salmon roe, for garnish (optional)

sansho, for garnish

Prepare the broth by combining the dashi, miso and mirin in a bowl, whisking to blend well; reserve.

Place the onion slices on the bottom of a hot pot and randomly pile the cabbage and potatoes on top of it. Pour in the reserved broth. Cover the pot and bring it to a boil over high heat. Decrease the heat to medium and simmer for 3 minutes.

Uncover the pot, and place the tofu, harusame, negi, enoki mushrooms, and shiitake mushrooms on top of the other ingredients, arranging each in a separate, neat bunch. Cover the pot again and simmer for 5 minutes more.

Uncover the pot and arrange the salmon slices on top of the other ingredients. Simmer until the salmon is cooked through, about 5 minutes more. As the fish cooks, use chopsticks at regular intervals to separate the slices and press them into the broth so they heat through evenly. Add the shungiku leaves and simmer for 1 minutes more. Garnish with a sprinkle of salmon roe, if using, over the pot.

Transfer the hot pot to the dining table. Serve the ingredients together with the broth in small bowls, accenting with the sansho.

Dashi

Yield: 8 cups

2 (6-inch) pieces kombu (dried kelp)

3 packed cups bonito flakes

Pour 8 cups of water into a saucepan, and add the kombu. Allow to soak for 30 minutes. Turn on the burner, and bring the water to a bare simmer. Just before the water boils, turn off the heat, and remove the kombu. Add the bonito flakes to the water, and bring water to a boil again. Allow to simmer for 1 minute, and then turn off the heat, and allow mixture to steep for 15 minutes. Strain to remove the bonito flakes (do not press on bonito flakes), and use or refrigerate the resulting dashi.