

Miso Eggplant

BY SHIGEFUMI KABASHIMA | @NR_NYC

In Japan, there's a traditional dish called Nasu Dengaku: simply grilled or fried eggplant topped with miso. It's a humble yet deeply nostalgic comfort food. A few years ago, while visiting a friend's house in Woodstock, A few years ago, while visiting a friend's house in Woodstock, New York, we were having a barbecue and I was about to grill fish with miso and rosemary. When I realized there was no rosemary, I picked some fresh mint from the garden instead. To my surprise, the mint paired beautifully with the miso, something I never expected. That accidental discovery inspired this dish. I wanted to create a richer, more layered version of Nasu Dengaku, balancing the depth of miso with the refreshing brightness of mint and herbs on eggplant.

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INGREDIENTS

1 medium eggplant (Japanese or Italian)
2 tbsp red miso
2 tbsp white miso
1 tbsp sake
1 tbsp mirin
1 tsp sugar
Neutral oil for frying
A few fresh mint leaves (chopped or small whole leaves)
A few sprigs of fresh dill
1 tbsp fresh pomegranate seeds
A pinch of lemon zest

INSTRUCTIONS

01 Cut the eggplant

Cut the eggplant in half lengthwise and score the flesh diagonally in a cross pattern to help it absorb flavor.

02 Fry the eggplant

Heat oil to 285°F (140°C) and shallow fry the eggplant. Add just enough oil to lightly cover the bottom of the pan — about 2 to 3 millimeters deep. Heat the oil over medium heat, then place the eggplant halves cut-side down. Cook for about 2–3 minutes per side, until the surface turns golden brown and the flesh becomes tender. The goal is to let the eggplant absorb some of the oil and become soft inside, without being greasy or fully submerged. If needed, you can add a small splash of extra oil during cooking, since eggplant tends to absorb oil quickly. After frying, remove the eggplant and place it on paper towels to drain any excess oil before brushing with the miso glaze.

03 Make the eggplant

In a small pan, combine red miso, white miso, sake, mirin, and sugar. Cook over low heat for 5–8 minutes, stirring constantly, until the mixture becomes smooth, glossy, and aromatic.

04 Coat the eggplant

Brush the miso glaze evenly over the fried eggplant.

05 Finish & serve

1. Using a kitchen torch, lightly flame the surface of the miso-coated eggplant until it develops a caramelized aroma and subtle char marks. (Be careful not to burn the miso — just enough to bring out fragrance and depth.)
2. Plate the eggplant and garnish with fresh mint, dill, and pomegranate seeds. Finish with a touch of lemon zest.