

PAPA's UMEBOSHI RECIPE

William Shuso Takeda

Grow your own ume – control your own good fortune

- Enjoy beautiful white and pink blossoms – late January and February.
- Law of large numbers.
 - Lots of ume to choose from – quality and availability.
 - Timing is everything – green for umeshu, a little blush for umeboshi.
 - Extra white ume vinegar.
- Plant a tree or two! Call Kenny @ Moraga Garden Center to order bare root stock in December for planting in January...or quickly make friends with “ume trees.”
- Prune to shape when young.
- Prune lightly for production and as needed to maintain size/shape.
 - Summer and winter

Grow your own red shiso – more is better!

- The more the better, enhancing flavor, color, and preservation.
- Start seeds in February or as soon as possible, nurture and grow to 2 inches or so.
- Transplant @ 2 inches +.
- Volunteers appear in February/March.
- Thin and/or transplant young shiso plants.
- Do not allow cross-pollination of red and green shiso plants.
- Shiso leaf harvest generally starts in June and continues weekly through August.
Preserve extra shiso in salt for next year.

Picking your ume – timing is everything

- Generally ready to be picked mid-May through June.
- Pick green for umeshu, leaving “perfect” ume for umeboshi.
- Pick with a “little blush” to a “little blush +” for umeboshi.
- The more blush, the softer the umeboshi.
- Too much blush/soft yellow ume is too ripe and will break down during processing.
- Sort ume – primes (unblemished, nice shape, and size) and seconds.
- Use seconds (scars, spots, funky shapes) to make additional white ume vinegar.
- Allow ume to ripen a bit over the next one to two days depending on preference for firm or soft umeboshi. Store ume in a cool, well-ventilated place during this period.

Wash and soak ume overnight

- Soak ume in water overnight to remove harshness.
- In the morning, drain water and carefully remove stems and blossom residuals.
- Rinse ume again and drain water.

Pickling ume

- Transfer 5 cups of ume to a clean 5 gallon container or crock and sprinkle evenly with half cup of sea salt (bulk sea salt available at Whole Foods).
- Repeat layers of ume and sea salt.
- Cover ume with a lid/plate that fits loosely inside the container and weigh down with large clean rock or drop lid.
- Cover container with a towel or lid and keep in a cool place.
- Over the next day or so, white ume vinegar will cover the ume and plate. Leave ume in this juice, with weight on for at least 3 days.
- After 3 days, remove and strain ume from the white ume vinegar (colander in a mixing bowl works well).
- Reserve white ume vinegar, and store in a cool place for now.
- Start the drying process.

Drying ume

- Lay ume out to dry on a table covered with butcher paper.
- Carefully remove any remaining stems and blossom residuals.
- Dry in full sun for 3 days, or longer as needed for ume to completely change color.
- Cover ume with cheese cloth over night.
- At 1 ½ days (or longer for color to change), turn each ume over and dry the other side for another 1 ½ days (or longer for color to change).
- Discard any ume with scars, spots, or green/yellow color.
- After 3 days, cover ume with cheese cloth and cool overnight.
- Note: If your red ume vinegar (see below) is not ready, keep dried ume covered with cheese cloth in a cool- well ventilated place.

White Ume Vinegar

- While ume is drying, filter white ume vinegar (coffee filter works well) and refrigerate.
- Discard undissolved salt.

Red Shiso

- While ume is drying, pick shiso leaves (red on both sides), being careful not to damage young leaves which mature and can be picked weekly through August.
- Wash well in small batches (colander works well) and if wilted, soak in fresh water for 30 – 60 minutes to refresh shiso.
- Lay out on towels and lightly air dry (outside in shade or indoors).
- “Toss” after 30 minutes and continue drying until most of the moisture is gone.
- Next take a handful of shiso leaves, lightly sprinkle with sea salt and rub leaves gently together to break the skin (3/4 lb. red shiso leaves/handful of salt).
- This starts the process that gets the red shiso juice started. Place in a glass bowl and repeat. Let salted red shiso stand for 60 minutes.
- Now take a handful of salted red shiso and squeeze well. Discard the black liquid that oozes out. Place shiso in a large glass container with cover.

Red Ume Vinegar = White Ume Vinegar and Salted Red Shiso

- Pour white ume vinegar over salted red shiso and cover container.
- Let stand in sun for a day + . You will be rewarded with a brilliant, rich red liquid.
- Let the red ume vinegar and shiso cool and refrigerate.

Umeboshi Time!

- Rinse cool ume and place in 5 gallon container with air tight cover.
- Strain red ume vinegar over the ume, reserving shiso.
- Red ume vinegar should cover the ume by approximately 1/8 inch. Add shochu as needed, and gently rock container to incorporate evenly.
- Cover ume with a layer of shiso...preserves umeboshi. Cover air tight container.
- Leave for at least three months to one year to allow full integration of ume flavor, aromatic shiso, and to achieve a pleasant red color.
- If you wish, repack umeboshi and shiso in sterilized pickling jars, fill with umeboshi and a little salted red shiso, fill with red ume vinegar, and place layer of salted red shiso on top of ume, cover jars tightly. Label jars – year and source of ume - and store in cool place.
- Ume can also be packed directly into jars. Add extra shiso in each jar to help with flavor, color, and preservation.

Enjoy!!! *Kent Takeda, 2.21.06*

Essential Notes

- Keep a notebook to document experience and learning, especially if your memory is good but short.
- The salt in umeboshi is generally 20% of the weight of the ume. This can be reduced to 10% – 15% for less salty umeboshi. If less salt is used, add more red shiso leaves and fully cover ume. This increases the natural preservative present in red shiso (perilla aldehyde), which prevents mold.
- Thin match sticks of fresh ginger adds nice flavor. This can be done when combining ume and red ume vinegar, or at any time there is left over ginger.
- Check two times per year to ensure the umeboshi are covered in red ume vinegar, thereby keeping umeboshi in a wet and soft condition. Add more red ume vinegar if available, and shochu if not. Gently rock container to incorporate shochu evenly.
- Red ume vinegar should remain brilliant red and clear. Over time, the ume vinegar may turn cloudy. This is okay, just rinse umeboshi and cover with fresh ume vinegar and shiso. It's important to have a supply of both for this and to get started next year. This is also a good time to repack in sterilized jars or Glad containers.
- Always a good idea to use ume seconds to make extra red ume vinegar, refrigerate.
- Extra shiso can be preserved for use in the following year. After salting and squeezing out black liquid, place in an airtight jar and refrigerate. This can be topped off with white ume vinegar and placed in full sun for a day before refrigerating.
- Whole large shiso leaves can be bundled, salted, and covered with ume vinegar. This shiso can be used to wrap musubi or individual umeboshi.
- Pickle myoga in red ume vinegar and a touch of natural rice vinegar, refrigerate.

Personal Notes: