

# Miso Yaki Onigiri from Heather Fukase

Onigiri rice balls are the sandwich of Japan. Anything goes once you learn the basics. You need to start with fresh, hot rice and a piece of plastic wrap. Traditionally people wet their palms and sprinkle them with salt and then lightly squeeze the rice in between kind of throwing it up in the air a little to give your palms a break from the scald of hot rice. But I'm all for making things as easy as possible and plastic wrap saves your palms and you can use the same plastic wrap to cover the finished rice ball for transport so it's not so wasteful after all.

The traditional rice ball filling is a salted pickled plum but these days anything goes: tuna salad, grilled salmon, pickled greens, karaage fried chicken, crabstick and lettuce- anything!

But today I want to introduce **Miso Yaki Onigiri** or grilled miso rice ball. These are one of my absolute favorites.

## INGREDIENTS:

### For the rice:

1 c. Japanese Rice

1 c. of water

### For the rice balls:

1 tsp oil

4 TBSP Miso

2 TBSP Mirin

## METHOD:

1. Wash and cook the rice according to your preferred method – ideally in a rice cooker or evaporation method – you want the rice to be a bit sticky. When finished cooking, allow the rice to cool slightly until able to handle by hand.
2. Form 4 rice balls: place  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the fresh hot rice (approx.  $\frac{1}{2}$  c.) on a square of plastic wrap in your palm. You can use plain rice but for something really delicious try mixing a teaspoon of sesame seeds and a couple of shredded shiso (perilla) leaves through the rice. Fold the square of plastic over the rice and by cupping your top hand and keeping your bottom hand flat as you gently squeeze the rice (gentle is definitely important here- you're trying to get the ball to hold together rather than squeeze it out) you should get a triangle with rounded corners. Just make sure that the rice balls are not too thick (about 2cm maximum in thickness) to ensure even cooking.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the Miso and Mirin. Add a little water if necessary so that you can brush the sauce on the rice balls.
4. Heat 1 tsp vegetable oil in a frying pan on medium to low heat. Brush one side of each rice ball with some of the miso sauce and then place the rice ball sauce-side-down in the pan. Brush each top with more of the miso sauce. Fry each side for about 1 min, then flip over. Repeat the flipping and brushing of the tops with the miso sauce 2 more times.
5. The rice balls are done when they are crisp and browned on each side. When it's finished leave it on a cake rack to cool and then wrap in plastic wrap. Or eat it straight away- even better!