

KATSUDON

I find Japanese cuisine to be one of the most difficult to master. The flavors are often so subtle that you really need to balance them perfectly. But that doesn't stop me from trying.

In Japan, Katsudon is not one of the more high-end dishes. It's actually a comfort food that is almost as popular as ramen with the Gen-Z crowd. It's basically schnitzel with sushi rice. It's worth the trip to your local Asian market to get your pantry stocked. All of the ingredients below can be found on-line too:

Nori Fume Furikake Rice Seasoning

Marukan Rice Vinegar

Annie Chun's Organic Seaweed

Original Dashi Stock Powder

Shichimi Togarashi

Sushi Rice

INGREDIENTS

FOR RICE

2 cups uncooked sushi rice

2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups water

2 tablespoons Japanese rice vinegar

1 tablespoons Japanese rice seasoning (Nori Fume Furikake)

FOR STOCK

2 cups dashi soup stock, prepared as per instructions

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons mirin

2 tablespoons sake

1 tablespoon sugar

FOR BREADING

flour (for dusting)

2 eggs beaten

panko (for coating)

salt and pepper

FOR CHICKEN KATSU

canola oil (for frying)

2 onions thinly sliced

3 boneless chicken thighs, skin removed and pounded to $\frac{1}{2}$ " thickness

Sea salt

3 eggs beaten

FOR GARNISH

1 sheet nori, crumbled (Annie Chun's Organic Seaweed)

1 scallion, thinly sliced

shichimi



PREPARATION

FOR RICE

Rinse sushi rice in strainer until water is clear. Combine with water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover and cook for 18 minutes. (Note: If using a rice cooker, only use 2 cups of water.) With wooden spoon, cut in rice vinegar and rice seasoning. Cover and keep warm.

FOR STOCK

In medium saucepan, heat dashi until boiling. Add soy sauce, mirin, sake, and sugar. Simmer for 5 minutes.

FOR KATSU SAUCE

In large skillet, add one cup of stock and sliced onions. Bring to boil, then simmer for ten minutes. Onions should be translucent.

FOR CHICKEN

While katsu sauce is simmering, season chicken with salt and pepper. Dredge chicken first in flour, then eggs, then panko.

Fill medium sized pot with 1" canola oil. Heat until oil is 350 degrees. Carefully place one piece of chicken at a time into pot. Fry for three to four minutes each side, or until nicely browned. Drain on paper towels. Lightly season with sea salt. When cool enough to handle, slice into $\frac{1}{2}$ " strips.

Gently place chicken pieces on top of onions and stock in skillet. Drizzle three beaten eggs over all and gentle toss until eggs are cooked, about two minutes. If all of stock has been absorbed, add some of remaining stock. You don't want the dish to be soupy, just moist.

Over a bowl of rice, place chicken pieces and top with onion and egg mixture. Drizzle with more stock if still too dry.

Garnish with crumbled nori, scallions, and shichimi.

KICKED UP THROWBACK COOKIE BARS

Some people call these “Hello Dolly Cookies.” The gang at Eagle Brand calls them “Magic Cookie Bars.” I call them just plain delicious. I’m sure many a mom had these waiting for their kids after school. They are classics with a great combination of textures and flavors thanks to the condensed milk and candy morsels.

As most of you know, I’m not the baker in the family, but my husband does his own version with a new find – espresso chocolate chips. Thank you Nestlé Toll House for creating these amazing new treats. My husband was lucky that the bag wasn’t empty by the time he decided to bake his last batch!

INGREDIENTS

1 sleeve + 3 graham crackers

9 tablespoons salted butter (melted)

1 14-oz can of sweetened condensed milk

1/2 cup chocolate chips

1/2 butterscotch chips

1/2 cup white chocolate ships

1/2 cup espresso chips

5 oz flaked coconut

1 cup of chopped nuts (optional)

PREPARATION

Heat oven to 350.

Line a 9 x 13 baking pan with non-stick aluminum foil.

Crush graham crackers and combine with melted butter. Press into bottom of prepared pan.

Sprinkle coconut, chips and nuts over graham crackers.

Evenly pour sweetened condensed milk over the coconut, chips and nuts.

Bake for 25 – 30 minutes.

Let cool.

Lift out by aluminum foil and place on cutting board. Cut out desired sized squares.

Note: Nuts are optional and chips can be added in any combination as long as they equal approximately 2 cups in total. You can also substitute dried fruit or M&M's for any of the candy chips.

EASTER DINNER RACK OF LAMB

Are you thinking about serving lamb for Easter? How about this simple rack of lamb? Rack of lamb can be expensive but try your local Costco. I promise – I'm not getting a kick back from them. Their lamb is grass-fed from New Zealand and it won't break the bank. It's a little fattier than some of the racks you might find at your fancy butcher shop, but it's worth doing your own trimming to save a few bucks. And did I mention it's delicious?

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4-6)

2 racks of lamb

6 tablespoons olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Dijon mustard

1 cup panko

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup parmesan, finely grated

2 cloves of garlic, finely minced

salt and pepper

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Trim as much fat off lamb as possible. Between the bones and joints, cut racks of lamb into individual chops. Season liberally with salt and pepper.

In a large skillet, heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil. Do not crowd the pan. Sear lamb for two minutes on each side, until lightly browned. Drain on paper towels.

Pour panko into shallow bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Add parmesan and garlic, then combine. Drizzle 3 tablespoons of olive oil on top of mixture and combine.

Brush each chop with mustard. Dredge each in panko mixture, covering entire chop.

Place chops on oven-proof grill pan. Roast in oven for sixteen minutes. Let rest for five minutes and serve.

Serving suggestions: Great plated over bed of wilted spinach or creamy polenta.

CHEESY BACON POTATO CAKE

Potatoes are having a moment of celebrity thanks to Stephen Colbert's "Is potato" joke. And why shouldn't we celebrate them? They are easy to grow, nutritious, inexpensive and delicious when fried, baked, or mashed. I'm always looking for new ways to use them, so here's my take on a cheesy bacon potato cake. I'll admit, I borrowed the technique from a Claire Saffitz's New York Times recipe, but I've tweaked it quite a bit substituting yogurt for sour cream and adding in bacon and cheese.

INGREDIENTS

6 large Baking Potatoes

4 strips bacon

5 Tablespoons of butter

6 garlic cloves, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup gruyere, large grate

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup full-fat yogurt

salt and pepper to taste

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

Chopped chives for garnish

Sour cream for garnish

PREPARATION

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees. Wash the potatoes and poke with

a fork. Place on baking sheet and bake for 75 minutes.

Remove from oven and let cool for ten minutes.

In a cast iron skillet, render 4 strips bacon until crispy. Drain on paper towels. When cool, crumble and set aside. Remove all but one tablespoon of bacon fat.

Melt the butter. Add the garlic and cook for about three minutes until it starts to brown. Remove pan from heat,

Scoop out the flesh from the potatoes and place in a large bowl. I like to include the skins from two potatoes for texture, so chop them into $\frac{1}{2}$ "-inch pieces and add them to the bowl. (If you're not a fan of skins, you can leave them out.)

Add in $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup of the gruyere, the yogurt, bacon, salt, pepper, and cayenne. Gentle fold together.

Place the skillet back on the stove and turn the heat to medium-high. Add the potato mixture to the skillet and gently fold it into the butter/garlic mixture. Flatten the potato mixture to even it out in the pan. Cook for about six minutes until the bottom begins to brown.

Shake the skillet to loosen the potato cake. If it doesn't move, cook for one more minute. If it still doesn't move, gently use a spatula to loosen it from the pan.

Place the skillet into the oven and bake for 30 minutes until lightly browned.

Remove from oven and let cool for ten minutes. Shake the pan to make sure the cake is loose. If not, use a spatula to loosen the bottom. Flip over onto a plate and garnish with sour cream and chives.

MUSHROOM CHICKEN STEW

For those nights when I want something hearty, but I don't want to fuss too much, I like this one-pot recipe. Mushrooms are always a huge hit in my house and I'm always looking for something new to do with chicken, so I came up with this mushroom chicken stew recipe. It's great paired with a dry white wine or a nice Pinot Noir.

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, sliced

3 cloves garlic, minced

6 boneless/skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1" pieces

2 cups potatoes, 1" cubes

2 cups mushrooms, sliced

1 cup dry white wine

2 cups mushroom or chicken stock

Chives for garnish

Freshly grated Parmesan cheese for garnish

A few drops of truffle oil (optional)

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a three-quart pot, heat the olive oil and sauté the onion

for about five minutes until it begins to brown. Add in garlic and sauté another minute. Add in chicken and stir until beginning to brown, about four minutes. Add in potatoes and mushrooms and sauté for another two minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add in white wine, bring to a boil and let reduce for 5 minutes. Add in stock, bring back to a boil, then lower to a simmer for 25 minutes. Re-season to taste.

TO SERVE

Ladle into bowls, garnish with a few chives, Parmesan cheese, and a few drops of truffle oil.