



# Howard Hillman's Great Peasant Dishes of the world

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## Oyako Donburi

Japan

It originated as a peasant dish. Today, it is a popular national specialty.

### Pronunciation:

oh-yah'-koh don'-buhr-ee

### Part 1 Recipe

#### ■ Ingredients

Servings: 4

##### ■ Eggs

3 large

##### ■ White rice

5 deciliters or 2 cups

##### ■ Dashi (a soup stock)

35 centiliters or 1 1/2 cups

##### ■ Mirin (sweet sake)

6 centiliters or 1/4 cup

##### ■ Soy sauce

50 milliliters or 3 tablespoons

##### ■ Chicken breast

Boned and skinned

1 medium sized

##### ■ Scallions

6 medium-sized

#### ■ Steps

**1** Remove the eggs from the refrigerator about 1 hour before starting step 2.

**2** Steam the rice, unsalted, according to package directions. Remove from the heat. Fluff the rice. Cover and reserve for step 8.

**3** Add the dashi, mirin, and soy sauce to a wok or large-sized skillet. Bring the mixture to a boil and cook, uncovered, for 3 minutes.

**4** Slice the chicken breast (both halves) across the grain into 6 millimeter or 1/4 inch thick strips.

**5** Slice the scallions into 1 centimeter or 1/2 inch long segments. Use both the white portion and 5 centimeter or 2 inches of the green.

**6** Stir the chicken and scallion pieces into the boiling liquid. Reduce the heat and simmer the preparation, uncovered, for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.

**7** Beat the eggs lightly. Carefully pour them all at once into the center of the simmering mixture. Do not stir the eggs - let them spread out on their own. Cover and gently simmer the preparation for 3 minutes, or until the eggs are lightly set.

**8** Divide the rice into four warm individual donburi bowls. (If you don't have donburi bowls, use deep-sided soup bowls with a capacity of approximately 7 deciliter or 3 cups.)

**9** Divide the solidified egg mixture into four portions. Place them on top of the rice in the individual bowls. Pour over the eggs all the sauce and any remaining chicken and scallion pieces clinging to the wok. Serve immediately.

### Part 2 Cooking tips

#### ■ Pointers

● **Rice** - Use long or (preferably) medium-grain rice. If you don't have dashi, substitute unseasoned chicken.

● **Mirin** - If you don't have it, substitute sake (or dry sherry) and 5 milliliters (1 teaspoon) of sugar.

● **Pan** - If your pan is not well seasoned, rub its interior with a light coating of vegetable oil before adding the liquid ingredients. This measure helps prevent the eggs from sticking in step 7.

● **Cooking liquid** - Do not let the liquid boil in steps 6 and 7 or the chicken will shrink and toughen.

● **Eggs** - Do not let the eggs become fully firm in step 7. They will continue to cook on top of the hot rice.

#### ■ Serving suggestions

● **Accompaniment** - Serve your donburi with pickled vegetables.

● **Beverage** - It can be tea, a hot clear soup, or warm sake.

● **Utensil** - Donburi is eaten with chopsticks.

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## ■ Variations

- **Leftovers** - Almost any fresh or leftover meat or vegetable can be used in the preparation of donburi. Possibilities include turkey, beef, veal, pork, shrimp, tuna, sardines, mushrooms, and fried bean curd.
  - **Garnish** - Embellish your donburi with artistically carved vegetable garnishes or with watercress and crumbled nori (dried laver).
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the topping of' this version of donburi.

Donburi is popular with both peasants and city folk because it is quick and easy to prepare as well as filling and nutritious. It is also a great way for a creative cook to use leftovers.

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### Part 3

## Travelog

One late spring I was the guest of a rice farmer who lived in a thatched dwelling in a small village north of Kyoto, Japan. He owned several paddies, each within walking distance of one another and his home. They were square, barely the size of a badminton court, and enclosed by low-lying mud embankments that served simultaneously as dams, footpaths, and boundary markers.

Rice farming is backbreaking work. The family - husband, wife, and children - must first plant the rice grains in seedling beds. In a month or so, the emerging shoots are replanted by hand in a waiting paddy that has been plowed and flooded with water.

The rice paddies are constantly weeded, and when the grain is mature, they are drained and allowed to dry. The laboring family cuts the plants and threshes the rice by hand. Some of the crop is kept for their use; the rest is sold to pay for the various goods they need to purchase.

On the day of my visit, my host and his family used some of their rice harvest in a dish called oyako donburi. Oyako means "mother and child," and refers to the chicken and egg in