

A delicious and green umami tasting Christmas menu

by Charlotte Vinther Schmidt

- I. Sweet, umami tasting miso potatoes: Baked, layered yellow and sweet potatoes in light miso, yeast flakes, cloves and allspice
- II. Fried oyster mushrooms with sauteed caramelized onions and beets in red wine and dark miso sauce
- III. Fresh Christmas salad: Finely sliced cabbage, endive, chopped apples and fresh sunflower shoots with a dressing of clementine, light miso and walnut oil, topped with roasted walnuts and cranberries.

I. Sweet umami miso potatoes (2-3 people)

Here, the umami taste comes from potatoes (a touch of glutamate), boosted by the umami synergy combination of miso (lots of glutamate) and yeast flakes (glutamate and lots of nucleotides). The umami boost increases sweetness and reduces the need for additional sugar compared to old-school caramelized potatoes.

Ingredients:

- ❖ 3 tbsp light miso paste
- ❖ 2 tbsp dried yeast flakes (also termed “nutritional yeast”)
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ 50 g butter
- ❖ 1/2 dl water or vegetable stock
- ❖ 1/2 tsp salt (not if using a salted stock)
- ❖ 3 tbsp brown sugar
- ❖ 1/2 tsp allspice
- ❖ 1/2 tsp cloves, ground
- ❖ 2 large baking potatoes, washed and scrubbed (ca. 500 g)
- ❖ 1 large sweet potato, washed and scrubbed (ca. 250 g)

Method:

1. Use a mandolin iron to thinly slice the yellow, then sweet potatoes (2 mm). Keep yellow and sweet potatoes in separate bowls.
2. Gently melt butter in a saucepan or microwave. Set aside.
3. Whisk together other ingredients. Gradually stir in warm melted butter (should not be above 60 C/140 F).
4. The finished sauce should amount to roughly 2 dl. Massage half of this sauce into the potato slices: 1/4 dl in the yellow, 1/4 dl in the sweet potatoes. 1 dl of sauce should remain.
5. Grease a small ovenproof casserole/baking dish (for this recipe, a dish the size of an A5 sheet/141x28 cm/6”x9”).
6. Layer the saucy potato slices in the baking dish: first yellow, then sweet potatoes. Layer the yellow baking potatoes on top – their starch content will get them crunchier than sweet potatoes.

7. Pour the remaining (1 dl) of sauce over the now-layered potatoes, cover with tinfoil, and bake in a preheated 175 C/350 F oven on the convection setting. Bake under tinfoil for roughly 30 min. Remove the foil and bake for an additional 30 min., until potatoes are tender, golden and crispy on top.

II. Fried oyster mushrooms with caramelized onions and beets in red wine sauce

In this recipe, the umami flavor comes from the oyster mushrooms (glutamate and nucleotides), which brings umami synergy to the course. The oyster mushrooms must be fried over high heat to achieve a Maillard aroma – the tasty flavour achieved through a browning reaction between certain free amino acids and free sugars on high, dry heat. The onions add kokumi peptides (continuity and mouthfeel), and when consumed with umami taste, the mouthfeel effect of the onions' kokumi is further enhanced. The umami also ups the sweetness of the onions and can theoretically boost certain aroma compound perception, in this dish, the primary aromas comes from browning (Maillard aroma) and from the red wine!

Ingredients:

- ❖ 3 celery stalks, washed and peeled
- ❖ 3 carrots, washed and scrubbed
- ❖ 2-3 yellow onions, peeled
- ❖ 1-2 red beets, washed and scrubbed
- ❖ 4-6 shallots, peeled
- ❖ 4 small red onions, peeled
- ❖ 1/2 dl water or vegetable stock
- ❖ 3 dl red wine
- ❖ Bay leaves
- ❖ 1 tray of oyster mushrooms (400 g)
- ❖ 1-2 tsp salt (less if salted stock is used, and not water)

Method:

1. Finely chop celery, carrots and yellow onions and brown in a sauté pan until golden, roughly 5 min.
2. Slice red beets into 2 cm thick slices. Halve red onions. Add to the sauté pan, along with the whole shallots, and brown for about 5 min.
3. Pour water/stock and red wine over the vegetables. Cover with a lid and let simmer at low heat for about 20 min. Remove the lid and let simmer for 5-10 min more until the onions are tender, while the beet still has bite. Do not allow all moisture to evaporate! Reduce heat and add liquid if needed.
4. Carefully spoon out and set aside the red onions, shallots and beets. Strain and squeeze what's left into a bowl (chopped vegetables, sauce, bay leaves). This is the finished sauce. Season the sauce to taste with a pinch of salt or smidgen of dark miso.
5. Brown the oyster mushrooms on a hot frying pan over high heat in butter or olive oil until golden., app. 2-3 min.
6. Assemble your mushrooms, beets and onions, drizzle them with sauce and serve. Top the dish off with greens, like sunflower sprouts or oven-baked crispy kale.

III. Christmas salad with clementine juice and light miso dressing

In this recipe, cabbage and endive cuddle in an umami dressing, as the crispy vegetables lack umami of their own. Here, umami comes from the miso (very high in glutamate) to round off a refreshing salad that includes all the basic tastes: sweet (apple, cranberry), sour (apple, clementine), bitter (endive, cabbage), salt (miso) and umami (miso).

Ingredients:

- ❖ Cabbage, e.g., red cabbage or red pointed cabbage (100 g)
- ❖ Endive (100 g)
- ❖ Apples, preferably a tart, crisp variety (200 g)
- ❖ Sunflower sprouts (50 g)
- ❖ 1 1/2 tsp light miso
- ❖ 2 tbsp walnut oil
- ❖ Juice from 2-3 clementines, (and some grated rind too, if organic and unwaxed)
- ❖ Roasted walnut kernels (optional)
- ❖ Dried cranberries (optional)

Method:

1. If using walnut kernels, roast them in a pan with a pinch of salt over medium heat and set aside to cool.
2. Thinly slice cabbage and endive using a knife or mandolin iron.
3. Chop the apples. If doing so ahead of time, put them in a refrigerated bowl of water, so they don't brown due to oxidation.
4. Mix the cabbage, endive and sunflower sprouts with the clementine & light miso dressing.
5. Top your salad with the chopped apples, and roasted walnut kernels + cranberries, if using them. Wait to add on the crunchy topping until just before serving so it don't go soft.

IV. Suggestions for a different type of Christmas dessert: Miso ice cream with spiced cherry sauce

After a hearty Christmas dinner, one can be left slightly nauseous and with warm cheeks. Here's a cold and refreshing alternative to the classic Danish rice & almond Christmas pudding, "risalamande". The salty, umami-flavoring of miso in ice cream gives flavour and depth to the sweet and compliments the warmed cherry sauce. The ice cream can be made well in advance.

Ingredients:

- ❖ 1/2 dl whipping cream, 38% fat
- ❖ 1/2 dl whole milk
- ❖ 8 pasteurized egg yolks (typically 2 yolks per cup, i.e., 4 cups)
- ❖ 220 g powdered sugar
- ❖ 3 1/2 tsp light miso paste
- ❖ 1 tbsp vanilla sugar
- ❖ 1/2 tbsp cardamom
- ❖ Cardamom
- ❖ Roasted peeled almonds, hazelnuts or walnut kernels (optional)

Method:

1. Beat egg yolks and powdered sugar with an electric whisker until fluffy (approx. 5 min)

2. Heat the milk and whipping cream mixture over low/medium heat to just below boiling point. Remove from heat and allow to cool.
3. Gradually stream the egg-sugar mixture into the warm milk while whipping heavily.
4. Heat the mixture – while stirring – to 80 °C / 176 °F.
5. Place in the freezer for at least 2 hours before running the mass in an ice cream maker until finished. Freeze (mature) the ice cream for at least 2 more hours before serving.
6. If you do not own a ice cream machine, pour it into portion size silicone containers (to allow a quick freezing) and store in the freezer until serving. The ice cream will be slightly less creamy and airy than if prepared on the ice cream machine.
7. Remove shortly from the freezer before serving.
8. Serve with cherry sauce, which can also be slightly warmed and spiced with a splash of sherry.
9. Top with roasted nuts, if using them.