

# SHISO



Shiso leaves are an aromatic herb from the same botanical family as mint that traditionally accompany sushi and sashimi. They are meant to be eaten along with the main item on the plate.

If you've ever had a tray of sushi or a Japanese bento box and noticed those strips of fake plastic grass separating the items, that's supposed to replicate of shiso leaves, with the plastic trimmed to represent the shiso leaves' characteristic ruffled, saw-toothed edges.

That's because shiso is traditionally used to separate the items in a tray or platter, to keep the flavors separate. Shiso leaves are also credited with antibacterial properties. They contain compounds called phytoncides, which are believed to help prevent the spoilage of

food that is wrapped in the leaves. For centuries the Japanese have used shiso leaves to help slow the spoilage of raw fish and seafood.

Depending on your location, shiso can be a bit hard to find fresh and can be slightly more expensive than other fresh herbs. It is sometimes available frozen or as a dried herb.

There are two main types of shiso leaves that are used in cooking: green and red. Green shiso leaves are more common by far; red shiso leaves are also edible, but they have a more astringent and bitter flavor. Red shiso leaves are mostly used for dyeing foods a red color, such as pickled plums, known as umeboshi, and pickled ginger.

Red shiso leaves are also the main ingredient in making a refreshing beverage called shiso juice. Shiso juice is prepared by simmering red shiso leaves, then straining and reducing the liquid along with sugar and mild vinegar to form a syrup. This syrup is then combined with sparkling water and served over ice. The resulting drink has a vivid red color like that of cranberry juice.

### **Shiso Leaf Uses**

Shiso leaves however are more than just a divider or an edible garnish—they are often included as an ingredient in the sushi itself. The herb pairs well with fatty fish like salmon, yellowtail, and tuna, and can be enjoyed by wrapping a whole leaf around a piece of sashimi and dipping it in soy sauce.

Shiso also complements vegetables and fruits. Julienned shiso leaves are often mixed with salads to add a fresh, citrusy flavor. Whole shiso leaves are made into tempura by dipping them in a light batter and frying until crispy and puffy. It's a popular ingredient in Vietnamese summer rolls.

Shiso is also a popular ingredient in drinks and desserts, including granita, mojito cocktails, infused water and teas and for making simple syrup. It is also dried and ground and used as a seasoning and sprinkled on rice, omelets, tofu and soups, (use your imagination) much like dried nori.

### **What Does It Taste Like?**

Shiso leaves have a fresh, citrusy flavor and aroma with hints of cinnamon, cloves, basil and mint. They have a somewhat astringent flavor and bitter finish, particularly the red shiso leaves. The texture is similar to fresh mint leaves, while dried shiso has a more subdued flavor. Shiso leaves can be used like mint in cocktails, desserts, and syrups for a different flavor. Serve with fresh sushi for a classic presentation.

### **Where do I buy?**

You can buy shiso leaves at most Asian grocery stores, especially Japanese. In addition to fresh leaves, shiso is also available frozen, packed in sesame oil and dried and ground.

Fresh they are generally sold by the bunch along with other fresh herbs. In Sonoma county You can also find at Farmer's Markets. Radical Family Farms in Sebastopol sells fresh in season and dried all year round at the Sebastopol Market.

### **Storage**

Fresh shiso leaves need to be kept in the refrigerator in the crisper. They dry out easily, so when you're working with them, it helps to keep them covered with a damp cloth or paper towel. Fresh shiso can last a few days but use as soon as possible for best results. Dried shiso should be stored the same as other dried herbs (in an airtight container in a cool, dark, place) and frozen shiso should be kept fully frozen until used.

### **Grow you own**

Shiso is an annual and best grown from seed and raised as seedlings. Soak the seeds overnight before sowing to accelerate germination. Sow 1mm deep in spring when temperatures reach above freezing as they need some heat to germinate. Don't cover them with too much soil as they need light to germinate. If your area is susceptible to frost, wait until the last frost date before sowing.

Germination can be slow and can take anywhere from 7 to 21 days. Once the seedlings have their first or second true leaves, they can be transplanted to their permanent position. Space the seedlings 6 inches apart and plant in moist soil, in full sun though they can tolerate part shade. Shiso grows to a height of 3 feet and takes approximately 70 days for mature leaves to form.

Shiso can be grown successfully in containers as well as a raised garden bed. Pinch the top to encourage more bushy growth and to provide micro greens. Once established they'll reseed themselves in temperate climates.

## **SHISO AND UME SAUCE**

This sauce recipe combines these two popular ingredients with soy sauce and mirin to create a very simple sauce with bold and interesting flavors. The sauce is best chilled when used for cold dishes, and room temperature when used for hot dishes.

Chilled dishes that go well with this sauce are cooked vegetables, such as spinach, bean sprouts, cabbage, or daikon. It also goes well with chilled tofu (hiyayako) or chilled somen noodles. Also delicious used as a dressing to garnish simple green leaf salads or a Japanese onion salad.

Hot dishes that would go well with this sauce include simple grilled chicken breast, steamed white fish, or boiled thinly sliced Shabu-shabu style pork or beef.

1/4 cup soy sauce

1 tablespoon mirin (sweet cooking sake)  
1 umeboshi (Japanese pickled plum)  
5 shiso (green perilla leaves)

In a medium bowl add soy sauce and mirin.

Cut the umeboshi pickled plum and remove the seed. Scrape any remaining flesh of the plum off of the seed and add it to the bowl. Mince remaining pickled plum into small pieces and add to the soy sauce.

Chiffonade the shiso perilla leaves by stacking them, rolling them up tightly, then cutting across the rolled leaves perpendicular to the leaves. It will create long thin pieces of shiso.

TIP: You may want to cut these strips in half or even smaller pieces so that when the dressing is used, small pieces of shiso are incorporated into the dish rather than a large clump of shiso leaves. The strips tend to clump together when soaked in the soy sauce mixture.

Mix all of the ingredients together until incorporated and then allow it to rest for about 30 minutes in the refrigerator so that all the flavors mesh together and the dressing chills. If you're in a hurry, the dressing can be used immediately, or simply allowing it to rest for 5 to 10 minutes will help the flavors to meld.

Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container for three to five days.

## SHISO MISO SOUP

Serves 4

5 cups vegetable or chicken stock  
5 shiso leaves, coarsely chopped, stem discarded  
2 lemongrass stalks, trimmed and crushed  
1/2-inch piece of ginger, peeled, cut 1/4 inch thick, smashed  
1 small serrano chile, stemmed, halved, seeded<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
3 medium cloves of garlic, peeled and smashed  
1 -2 tablespoons white miso paste  
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice  
Soy sauce, to taste

You can make this on the stovetop, or you can make in in an Instant Pot, and I'll include instructions for both below!

Combine the stock, shiso leaves, lemongrass, ginger, chile, and garlic in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, and then simmer gently covered for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and



stir in the miso paste. Taste and add more seasoning if needed - salt or soy sauce will work. Finish with a generous squeeze of lime juice.

Taste and add more soy sauce if needed. Finish with lime juice just before serving.

Freeze any broth you aren't going to use within a few days.



**WATERMELON SHISO SALAD**

Serves 4 to 6

4 cups cubed seedless watermelon (cut into 1-inch cubes)  
1 cup diced Asian or Kirby cucumber  
2 scallions, cut thin at a diagonal  
1 medium avocado peeled, seeded and cut into large squares  
Salt and pepper to taste  
4 shiso leaves, stacked, rolled and cut into thin ribbons  
1–2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds for garnishing

**Ginger Lime Dressing:**

1/2 teaspoon very finely minced ginger ( or use ginger paste)  
1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lime juice  
1 1/2 tablespoons honey or agave  
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil  
2 teaspoons shoyu or soy sauce  
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Place watermelon, cucumber, scallions and avocado in a medium bowl.

Mix dressing ingredients together in a small bowl then pour over watermelon salad.  
Gently toss. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Garnish with shiso ribbons and toasted sesame seeds.



### **AHI TUNA POKE WITH SHISO**

Makes 4 to 6 servings for dinner: 8 to 10 as an appetizer

Hawaiians have enjoyed this recipe for a very long time. Without refrigeration, salt was historically added to raw seafood as a way of preserving and keeping fish fresh. The term *poke* means “to cut into cubes”.

1-1/2 pounds sushi-quality tuna loin, usually yellow fin or big-eye tuna



1 red shallot, peeled and sliced very thin  
4 scallions, trimmed and both green and white sections thinly sliced  
3 tablespoons soy sauce  
1 tablespoon sesame oil  
1 teaspoon mirin (sweet Japanese rice wine)  
1/2 teaspoon chile-garlic sauce, or to taste  
Big pinch of sugar  
1 tablespoon furikake or toasted sesame seeds  
Shiso leaves

Carefully cut the tuna, against the grain, into thick planks of 3/4 inch, and then into 3/4-inch cubes. Place cubes into a large bowl and add to them the onion and scallions.

Combine the soy sauce, sesame oil, mirin, chile-garlic sauce and sugar in a small bowl. Whisk together and adjust seasonings to taste.

Pour the sauce mixture over the fish and toss gently to combine. Just before serving sprinkle the furikake or sesame seeds over the fish, toss again gently, then cover and place in the refrigerator for an hour or two to chill. Serve with shiso leaves topped with mixture.

\*A Japanese rice seasoning mixture made of seaweed, sesame seeds, salt and sugar. Many variations are available including additions of dried fish, dried egg yolk, etc. Readily available in Asian markets and on-line.





## SHISO TEMPURA

Often served as an accompaniment to shrimp tempura it is a delicious garnish for all kinds of meats and fishes.

2 quarts peanut oil or vegetable shortening  
1/2 cup (3 ounces) cornstarch  
1/2 cup (2 1/4 ounces) all-purpose flour  
Kosher salt  
1 large egg  
1/4 cup 80-proof vodka  
1/2 cup ice-cold club soda  
20 shiso leaves  
1/2 pound large (21-25) shrimp, optional  
Lemon wedges, for serving

Heat oil to 375° in a large wok or Dutch oven over high heat, then adjust heat as necessary to maintain the temperature. Line a large plate or baking sheet with a double layer of paper towels.

Combine cornstarch, flour, and 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl and stir with chopsticks to blend. Combine egg and vodka in a small bowl and whisk until completely blended. Add club soda and stir to combine. Add this to bowl with flour and vigorously stirring until

liquid and dry ingredients are just barely combined. There will be many bubbles and pockets of dry flour.

Add vegetables (and shrimp if using) to batter. Pick up leaves a few at a time, allowing excess batter to drip off, and transfer to hot oil, getting your hand as close as possible to the surface before letting go in order to minimize splashing. Increase heat to high to maintain the temperature as close to 350°F as possible and add remaining leaves (and shrimp if using) a few pieces at a time. Immediately start agitating them with chopsticks or a wire mesh spider, to separate, flipping them, and constantly exposing them to fresh oil.

Continue frying until batter is completely crisp and pale blond, about 1 minute. Transfer tempura to a paper towel-lined plate or baking sheet and immediately sprinkle with salt. Serve with lemon wedges.



**SHISO PESTO**

Makes about one cup

This is just a guide. You can add more (or less) of any of the ingredients. Use as is for pasta, fold into mayonnaise or crème fraiche, stir into a basic vinaigrette, beat into softened butter to serve with fish or steaks . . . you get the idea.

3 large cloves peeled garlic  
3 cups packed fresh shiso leaves  
1 - 2 tablespoons lightly toasted and chopped pine nuts or almonds (preferably blanched or skinned)  
1/3 cup or so olive oil  
1/4 cup or so freshly grated parmesan or asiago cheese  
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Add garlic cloves to a small saucepan of boiling salted water and cook for a minute or so. Plunge shiso leaves into the pan for 5 seconds. Immediately drain and plunge into a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking and set the bright green color. Drain and squeeze out all the water that you can. Add to a blender along with the nuts, oil and cheese and purée. Correct seasoning with salt and pepper. Store covered in refrigerator for up to 5 days or freeze up to 3 months.

## FURIKAKE

Furikake is a Japanese seasoning typically made with toasted sesame seeds, nori, salt, sugar. It varies from region to region and can also include anything from bonito flakes to chili flakes to miso powder to shitake powder to poppy seeds. Some versions even include dried shiso leaves (another thing to do with your shiso leaves next summer).

It's classic use is over white rice or rice balls. Other uses: to season soft boiled or scrambled eggs, tofu, noodles, sushi and handrolls, on avocado toast, over a bagel with cream cheese and smoked salmon. (yum), use to season homemade popcorn!

Basic Furikake mixture:

1/3 cup white sesame seeds  
2-3 seasoned nori sheets (or plain) or 6 dried shiso leaves  
1/2 teaspoon salt, more to taste  
1/2 teaspoon sugar

In a food processor or spice grinder, pulse sesame seeds 1 or 2 times so that the seeds are partially ground, leaving some whole, taking care they grind quickly.

Place seeds in a cast iron pan on low heat, stirring every minute or so until they become fragrant and lightly toasted, about 5 minutes.



Stack, fold and cut nori into small strips then cut into small pieces with a sharp knife or kitchen scissors, or you can also crumble with your hands.

Add to sesame seeds in a small bowl, along with salt and sugar.  
Store in an airtight container for up to 6 months.

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