

Recipes for Celebrating Asian Canadian Heritage

Sharing meals was a significant ministry in early churches, and continues to be in many churches today. Ethnic minority congregations keep a ministry of hospitality by sharing their comfort foods. Most Asian Canadian congregations have potluck luncheons often, because they need a space where their culture, languages, and food are valued. Here are two recipes from Asian Canadian United Church members.

Chicken Congee: A Chinese Comfort Food

JoAnne Lam

This is a classic recipe of a food that we always have at family gatherings. It's not a celebratory food like one for Chinese New Year, but it provides a sense of home, comfort, and care to the one being served. It has similar versions in other Asian cultures.

Ingredients

- 3/4 lb chicken breasts (sliced thin)
- 1 tbsp corn starch
- 1 tbsp dry sherry (optional)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp white pepper

Congee:

- 1 cup long grain rice
- 10 cups water
- 1 cup chicken stock (or adequate chicken bones for homemade stock)
- 1 tbsp ginger (grated or finely chopped)—if you like ginger, add liberally as my mother told me that it helps with circulation and to ward off colds and chills

Garnish:

- sesame oil
- 2 tbsp each of cilantro, green onions, and/or coriander (chopped)

Tip: If you prefer, you do not have to use chicken. You can use other types of meat like pork, beef, or fish (salmon), or even slices of century eggs. Pay attention that all meats need to be marinated before cooking with the congee, or they will not have adequate flavours.

Chicken Congee

Directions

1. In a bowl, combine the chicken slices with corn starch, dry sherry (optional), salt and pepper. Let it marinate.
2. To make congee, bring water in a large pot to a bubbling boil, add rice (rinsed with tap water a couple of times), bring back to a boil. If you are making your own stock, add the chicken bones at this point.
3. Turn the heat to low and simmer for about 1 1/2 hours (cover partially and be careful here, because it could splatter and overflow). Stir occasionally to avoid sticking and burning to pot. You should be able to get a mixture where the grains look broken and almost dissolved, with a texture like thin porridge.
4. Add chicken stock, then bring to a boil. At this point, you can remove the chicken bones if you desire.
5. Add in the ginger and marinated chicken slices, stir to mix and allow to boil till chicken has cooked (2 min). Stir constantly to avoid sticking to the bottom. If the consistency is too thick, add some more water and bring to a boil.
6. Divide congee into bowls. Garnish with sesame oil and sprinkle with cilantro, green onions, or coriander.
7. Optional: serve with a Chinese crullers (these can be purchased ready-made from Asian supermarkets and reheated in the oven for a few minutes) and white pepper on the side if desired.

Whenever we remember my grandmother (we called her “Mah Mah”), we recall the numerous tasty dishes she used to prepare as a way of gathering the three generations around the table. It was always a feast, no matter if the occasion was an ordinary meal or a Chinese festival. The feasting at our table as a family fostered the sharing of fellowship that is unique to ourselves, and to build up our identities as an extended family. After driving from Edmonton, Alberta, to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, our tired senses would be overwhelmed by the welcoming aroma of chicken congee. Despite the uncertain arrival times at our Auntie’s place, Mah Mah always managed to keep the congee piping hot and the refills seemed endless. As we sat at the table to partake of this meal, made with love and care, we felt wholly embraced by our Mah Mah’s invisible arms and smothered with her kisses with every spoonful of congee.

When you give this recipe a try, I hope you will also experience what I have described. It is not a complicated recipe, but it requires love and patience. Whenever I make this dish for my partner and children, they too can taste the love that I put into the cooking process. I believe that love flavours our cooking and what we bring to our tables, as Christ sets the table of Christ with love and grace, justice, and peace. Enjoy and share the experience.

Oyako-Donburi: A Japanese Comfort Food

Maki Fushii

One of the most popular, ordinary foods in Japan is Oyako-Donburi (chicken and egg over rice). “Oyako” in Japanese means “parents and children,” for chicken and egg are the main ingredients. This dish belongs to the *tenyamonono* category of Japanese recipes. A *tenyamonono* usually consists of *gu* (topping), which is placed on top of freshly cooked warm rice in a *donburi* (porcelain bowl). The *gu* can be any of following: tempura; tonkatsu; beef cutlet; quick-cooked vegetables with beef, pork, or chicken (sometimes cooked with a beaten egg); or some types of seafood including sashimi (sliced tuna or another variety).

This recipe is not appropriate for a formal occasion. Rather, it is one of my family’s comfort foods. It is easy to cook, but there are subtle differences of flavour in each family. Every family has different flavour of Dashi, which is made with dried kelp or shiitake mushroom, bonito, etc. Dashi is a difficult, but satisfying, flavour to make. Many people simply use Dashino-moto, a chemical seasoning (as in the recipe below). But for a healthier flavouring, you have to make Dashi using dried kelp, shiitake mushroom, or bonito.

Ingredients

Dashi:

- 1/2 tsp Dashino-moto, dissolved in 1/2 cup of water, or you may substitute 1/2 cup chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons or more soy sauce,* as needed
- 1 tablespoon or more brown sugar,* adjusted for desired sweetness
- *you can adjust these while cooking the vegetables and meat

- 1/4 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- shiitake mushrooms (fresh or dry), thinly sliced, if available
- about 2 oz. chicken breast, sliced
- 2 stalks green onion, chopped in 1- to 2-inch lengths
- 1 egg, beaten

Serve with freshly cooked Japanese-style rice.

Cooking time: 20–30 minutes *Servings:* 1

Oyako-Donburi

Directions

- 1) Mix the Dashi.
- 2) Place the sliced yellow onion, sliced shiitake mushrooms, and Dashi in a small skillet. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the onion is tender.
- 3) Continue to cook, while adding the chicken slices and green onion. When the chicken is cooked through, pour a little of the sauce on top.
- 4) Then spread the beaten egg over the vegetables and meat, and put the lid on. Turn off the heat. Wait for 2 or 3 minutes.
- 5) While you wait, put the rice on a dinner plate.
- 6) Take the lid off, and place your *gu* on top of the rice.

If you cook for two or more, use a large skillet, divide the *gu*, then serve.