

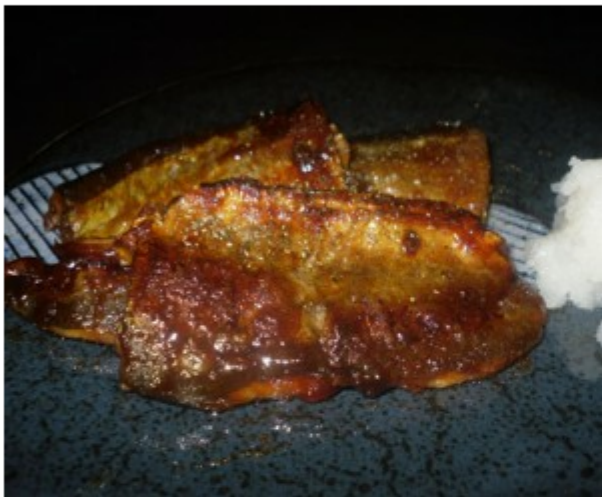
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Sanma-no kabayaki: Braised Pacific Saury Fillets

Posted in [main dish](#), [Recipe](#) by kanako on February 23, 2010



Here's another recipe featuring my favorite fatty fish: [pacific saury](#) (sanma). This one involves rather more than just grilling: "[Kabayaki](#)" is a braising technique for fish fillets that uses a sweetened soy sauce mixture similar to what you would use as a marinading liquid for teriyaki.

Classically, kabayaki is a way of cooking [freshwater eel](#). If you've been to a Japanese restaurant in England you've probably run into Kabayaki as "unagi-don" or "unadon" - [eel-on-rice](#). It's great; a classic restaurant dish.

In this recipe, we use Pacific Saury instead of eel for two very good reasons. First, eel spoils almost as soon as it's out of the water, making it virtually impossible to cook at home (unless you have a large fish tank, some sharp knives and a fair bit of gumption!) Second, eel is expensive. Sanma, on the other hand, is not only delicious but affordable, too: so Saury Kabayaki is kind of like poor man's Eel Kabayaki.

It's a powerful dish, sure to impress friends, and very good when served "donburi" style: in a large bowl over plain white rice.



Ingredients (for two):

- Whole pacific saury - two (can't find them? substitute another oily fish, such as mackerel or sardines.)
- Flour
- Oil – two tablespoons
- [Sansyo powder](#)

For the sauce

- Soy sauce – three tablespoons
- Sugar – one tablespoon
- Mirin – two tablespoons
- Water – two tablespoons

Preparation:

First you fillet the saury by cutting it into four parts (two fillets, which you cook, and the head and the spine, which you discard). This technique is called *sanmai oraoshi* in Japanese.

1. Cut open the saury's stomach and take out the guts
2. Run the fish (the inside too!) under a cold water tap to clean it
3. Pat off the excess moisture using kitchen paper
4. Cut off the head
5. Slice it open from the tail to the head along the spine
6. Slice the other side too
7. Cut the meaty part in half



Cooking:

1. Mix the ingredients for the sauce (soy sauce, sugar, mirin and water) in a bowl
2. Cover the fillets with flour
3. Heat the pan and add the oil
4. Sauté the fish, starting with the inside
5. When it turns brown, turn it over and sauté the skin side
6. When the fillets are cooked through, add the mixed sauce all at once
7. Let the sauce boil until it covers both sides of the fillets and reduces
8. Plate the fillets, or serve them as [donburi](#) (on deep bowls, over rice). Sprinkle with powdered sansyo pepper and serve.



Even if you don't make donburi, I **strongly recommend** to serve this with white rice on the side. It's not the same without it!

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11 Responses

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1.  **Jenn** said, on February 23, 2010 at [2:17 pm](#)


Thanks for this recipe! I happen to have sanma kabayaki for lunch today, but it was from a can. It is great to learn how to make it from the fresh fish!

[Reply](#)

-  **kanako** said, on February 24, 2010 at [2:57 pm](#)

Hi Jenn,
making it from scratch is very easy! Please try this recipe if you like Kabayaki.

[Reply](#)


2.  **cldfn** said, on February 26, 2010 at [11:00 am](#)

Great blog, I've been looking for japanese home cooking for a while.

This looks delicious, I can't wait to cook it ! By the way, any alternative side dish suggestion for this recipe ?


For health reasons, I'm not allowed to eat rice...

[Reply](#)

-  **kanako** said, on March 1, 2010 at [3:07 pm](#)


Oh dear, that's really too bad! If you can't eat rice, I think it would be good with lettuce, especially iceberg. You want to pair this with something neutral, because it has a really strong taste.

[Reply](#)


-  **Roberto N** said, on March 8, 2010 at [10:58 am](#)

Or try Quinoa! A bolivian staple, it is similar to couscous and very easy to prepare.

[Reply](#)

-  **cldfhn** said, on March 11, 2010 at [9:05 am](#)


Thanks for your suggestions, I'll try both !

3.  **Kepler** said, on March 1, 2010 at [6:04 am](#)

That looks yummie and all and I will try it with mackerel but we need more chicken recipes! 😊


Specific fish sorts are often harder to get, whereas a chicken's a chicken's a chicken!
Or perhaps Japanese are not so mad about chicken?

[Reply](#)

-  **kanako** said, on March 1, 2010 at [3:10 pm](#)


Well, we eat a lot of chicken, but my husband is ideologically opposed to me publishing my fried chicken recipe – even though it's delicious – because extremely fried chicken doesn't strike him as genuinely Japanese – even though it is. Leave it to me, though, I'll put it up one day when he is not looking.

[Reply](#)

4.  **TamagoSan** said, on February 9, 2011 at [12:34 am](#)

Hi Kanako, I also live in Montreal and swear by your website for lots of my meals. I was wondering where you go to get specifically Japanese fish, such as Saury and fresh fish that can be eaten raw, such as tuna for maguro zuke don. Thanks for all the recipes!

[Reply](#)

-  **Francisco Toro** said, on February 9, 2011 at [9:21 am](#)

Hi TamagoSan!

We've only ever found Sanma in Montreal once – at the big yearly Japanese Food sale at Angel Seafoods (usually held in November.)


<http://kanakoskitchen.com/2009/11/14/shopping-spree-at-angel-seafoods-montreal/>

The rest of the time, we use Mackerel from Nouveau Falero on Park Ave. That's where we go for fish to eat raw as well.

Frankly, though, the Fresh Fish situation in Montreal is pretty dire – especially when you look for the kind of fatty fish you need for most Japanese recipes. Nouveau Falero seems to be the best fish shop in town, but even there the selection is pretty spotty. It's like Quebeckers don't really eat any fatty fish other than salmon, which has too strong a taste to use in a lot of these recipes.

So we seem to find ourselves buying frozen sardines at Loblaws a lot – they're cheap, oily and reasonably tasty. Other than that, just look out for the Angel Seafoods sale each year. It's a great opportunity to stock up on nice (though frozen) Japanese fish at reasonable prices.

[Reply](#)

-  **TamagoSan** said, on February 10, 2011 at [9:21 pm](#)

Good to know, thanks! I'm from Vancouver, and had a hard time finding any sort of Japanese restaurant that wasn't sketchy sushi. As well, yes it's hard to find the assortment of fish you can get on the Pacific, thanks again for the reply

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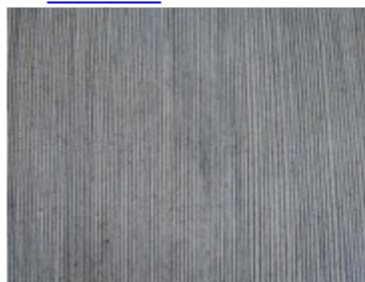
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