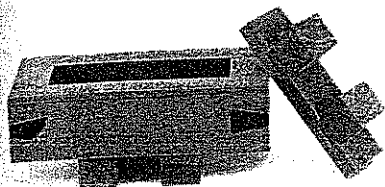


SUSHI EQUIPMENT

ONE OF THE GREAT DELIGHTS of Japanese cuisine is sushi—vinegared rice molded into different forms and garnished with any number of ingredients, from raw fish or vegetables to omelet strips or seaweed. The sushi rice itself is simply boiled rice with kombu (kelp), mixed with a vinegar dressing that also

includes sugar and salt. There are several ways to shape the sushi rice and fish or vegetables: roll them in seaweed to make *makizushi*, pat them into oblong individual forms topped with raw or cooked fish for *nigirizushi*, or top them with seafood and vegetables on a bed of rice for *chirashi-zushi*.

13.57 WOOD BATTERA SUSHI MOLD



Made of pale blond, unfinished wood with beautifully mortised joints, this elegant oblong box appears at first glance far more suitable for storing jewelry than for mundane kitchen chores. But—unsurprisingly, when

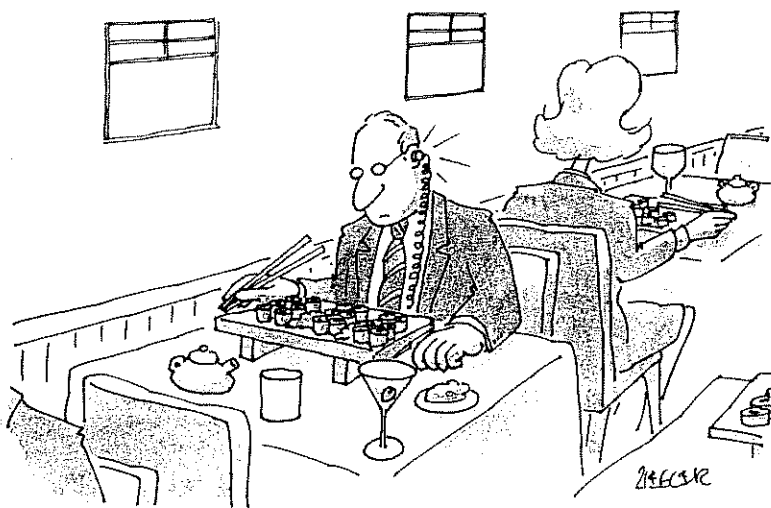
one reckons with the Japanese taste for purity of design—its form and function are beautifully matched. The 8"-long, 4½"-wide box, called an *oshiwaku* (or "push frame"), has a removable top and bottom. It is used to press sushi rice and its garnishes of fish, omelet strips, or vegetables into a firm cake that can then be sliced into individual servings to make *battera* sushi, one of the oldest sushi styles. *Battera* comes from the Portuguese word for "ship," *bateira*. The pressed sushi was said to resemble a ship. The vinegared rice is

spread over the bottom of the box (the interior area is 5½" long by 2¼" wide by 1½" deep), topped with your garnish of choice, and pressed down with the inset top. When the top and the frame are removed, the rice cake remains on the base.

13.58 MAKIZUSHI MAT



Uniquely Japanese are the delicacies called *makizushi*, in which vinegar-seasoned rice is spread over a thin sheet of toasted black seaweed called *nori* and then rolled around a center of raw fish or crisp vegetables. This gadget, which resembles a small bamboo roll-up window shade, is known as a *sudare* and is helpful in rolling up the whole assembly—it's used in the same way as a linen towel or napkin is used to roll up a jelly roll. In a pinch, you can roll *makizushi* with a damp linen napkin, but this 9½"-square bamboo mat is the authentic way to do it, and it works very well. The round slats are held together by five rows of twisted string, knotted together with short ends left hanging at opposite sides of the mat. After rolling, be sure to leave the *makizushi* resting in the *sudare* for 5 minutes until it "sets." Then unroll, and cut the *nori*-wrapped

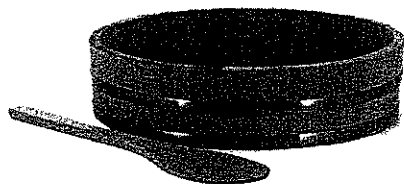


"From right to left, you have your tekkamaki, your futomaki, and then your yamaimo roll. The little pile of pink stuff is ginger, the green one's wasabi. And, of course, you already recognize your vodka martini."

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cylinder into 1" lengths. Serve as an hors d'oeuvre or as a first course, preferably on round bamboo or lacquer trays.

13.59 HANGIRI TUB WITH PADDLE



Making good sushi rice is an art: you must begin with a suitable variety of rice, cook it properly, and season it correctly. But that's not all. You must also cool the rice quickly and toss it carefully, without breaking the grains. The best utensils for these tasks are a *hangiri* tub and wooden paddle. *Hangiri* tubs are made of wood because wood absorbs the excess moisture from the cooked rice; nonporous materials like metal or porcelain would make the rice gummy by trapping the steam. The bowl should be damp before you use it so the rice won't stick. *Hangiri* bowls are always very wide and relatively short, giving plenty of surface area for quick cooling and for additional evaporation of moisture. The

one we chose is also beautiful, holds 1½ quarts of rice, and is 17½" in diameter and 4" high, with two cop-

per strips that encircle the sides. The 19" wooden paddle (*kijakushi*) lets you mix the rice and seasonings gently.

HOW TO MAKE PERFECT RICE

✧ ELIZABETH ANDOH ✧

Greater quantities of rice are easier to cook than scant ones; 1¼ cups or more of raw rice is really best and I suggest that 1 cup be the minimum. The water used in cooking rice, whether short or long grain, in the Japanese fashion, should measure a generous 15 percent more than the raw rice. Here is a table for the reference:

- For 1 cup raw rice, use 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons water
- For 1¼ cups raw rice, use 1½ cups water
- For 1½ cups raw rice, use 1¾ cups water
- For 1¾ cups raw rice, use 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons water
- For 2 cups raw rice, use 2½ cups water

To the uninitiated, the timing of rice cooking may seem tricky at first. But be assured that with several attempts you most certainly can produce lovely pearly grains of cooked rice. There is an old Japanese nursery rhyme that tells how. It goes like this:

<i>Hajimé choro choro</i>	At first it bubbles
<i>Naka pa ppa</i>	And then it hisses
<i>Akago naité mo</i>	Even if the baby is crying [from hunger]
<i>Futa toru na.</i>	Don't remove the lid.

This chant melodically describes the basic rule: never remove the lid to see what is happening. You should know from the sound the pot makes (bubbling or hissing) just how the rice is doing. Peeking inside allows precious moisture to escape and it also reduces the valuable cooking pressure within the pot.