

For Review Only. The Art of Japanese Vegetarian Cuisine

Shojin Ryori

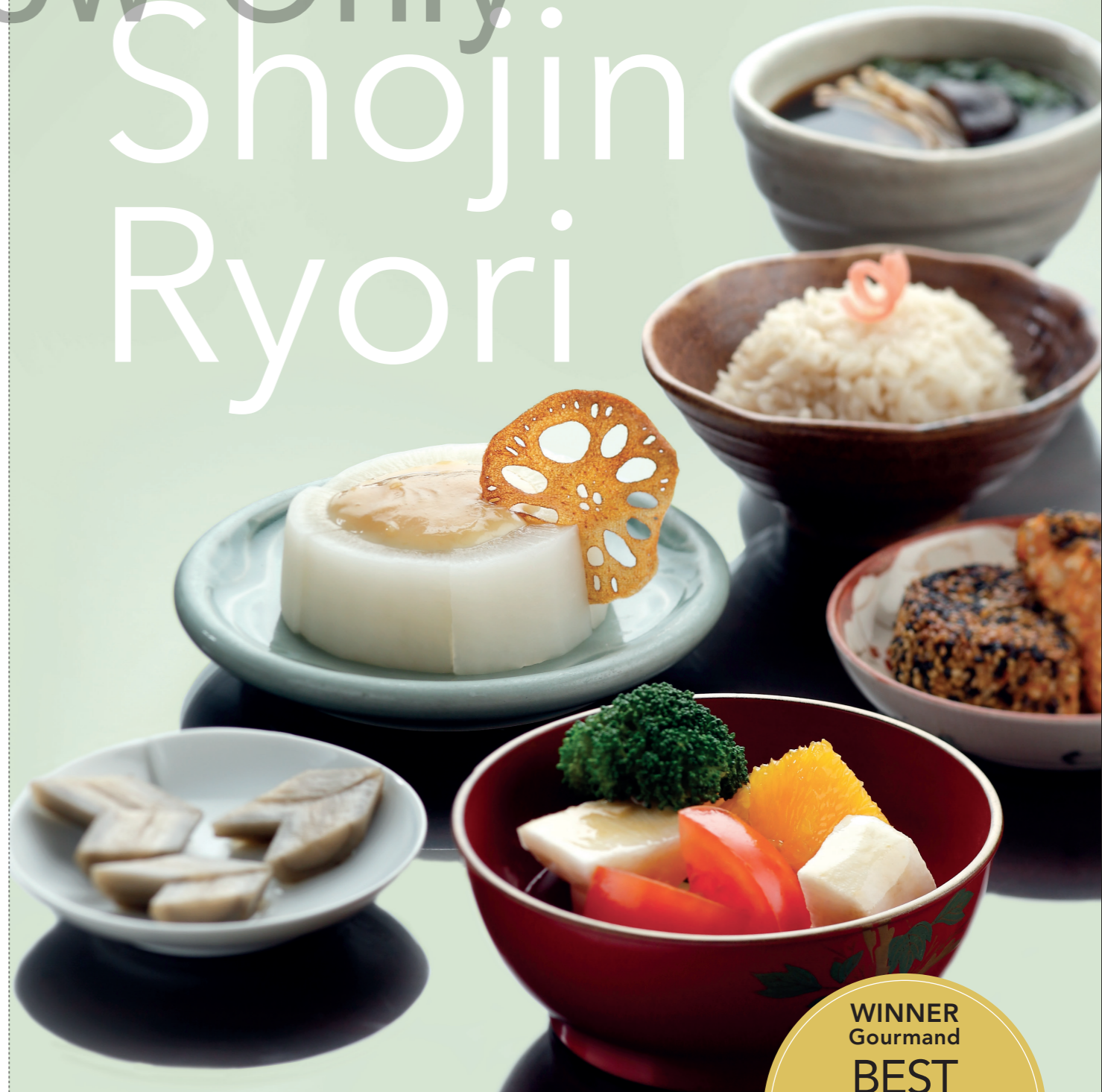
is the art of Japanese vegetarian cuisine that originated from the Japanese Zen temples, and is today widely popular all over the world for its healthful and well-balanced meals prepared without meat, fish, eggs or dairy products.

With clearly written step-by-step instructions and insightful cooking tips, chef Danny Chu of Enso Kitchen will show you how to transform simple, readily available ingredients into creative, flavourful and satisfying *shojin ryori* meals in your home kitchen.

Shojin Ryori

Marshall Cavendish Cuisine

Danny Chu



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About the Author

Danny Chu is a former foreign currency trader who left the corporate world and followed his passion to Japan to learn more about *shojin ryori*, the art of Japanese Zen cuisine. With hard work and unwavering determination, Danny mastered traditional Zen temple cooking and became the first *shojin ryori* chef in Singapore.

He ran Enso Kitchen for several years, delighting both vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike with his creative dishes, and garnered rave reviews from the media, including *Wine & Dine*, *Travel+Leisure*, *BBC Good Food*, *Appetite* and *The Peak* magazines, as well as *The Business Times* and Channel News Asia.

This is Danny's first cookbook. Since publication, it has won Best Japanese Cuisine Book (Best in the World category) in the 2015 Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. Currently based in Taiwan, Danny hopes to share more of his *shojin* cooking through cooking sessions and subsequent cookbooks.



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Simple, Delicious, Healthy

Shojin cooking uses seasonal ingredients to get the best out of the produce in order to nourish the body. The ingredients are purely vegetables or from plant sources, and no artificial colouring and flavouring is used. It also omits the use of eggs and dairy products, making it suitable for vegan diets.

Once, when I had the opportunity to visit a farm in Japan, I noticed how the farmer took a lot of pride in her work. To introduce me to the produce, she harvested a turnip from the ground, washed it and cut it in half for me to try. The turnip tasted sweet and mild, even though it was not even peeled. Seeing my surprise at how good the turnip tasted, the farmer commented that most vegetables taste good as they are. She then joked that as the chef needed a job, they started to make things more elaborate and created dishes.

This simple encounter made me realise the benefits of using seasonal produce, of enjoying vegetables when they are fresh and tasty. It is with this understanding that I have created and served many different seasonal *shojin* sets. Despite having done this for the past decade, I remain in awe at how these dishes can be prepared with such simple ingredients, yet be so delicious and healthy.

Shojin ryori is made up of a variety of dishes and presented on trays. Care and attention is given to the presentation, the colours and the taste to intrigue the five senses.

I have specially created the menus in this book using seasonal ingredients that can be easily found outside of Japan. In addition, I have also suggested substitutes for ingredients where applicable, so you will not be limited by the availability of ingredients.

The dishes can also be prepared and enjoyed individually, so you do not need to prepare the full set if you do not wish to. The important thing is for the experience to be light-hearted and peaceful. Enjoy!

Shojin Seasonal Menu

Although *shojin ryori* originated as a cuisine prepared by the Buddhist monks in the Zen temples as part of their spiritual practice, the essence of *shojin* cooking is about mindfulness and enjoyment. The recipes are relatively easy to follow and practical, and can be enjoyed by all.

There are no particular rules or sequences to follow in eating or serving the dishes in *shojin* cooking. Instead, the emphasis is placed on balance and harmony. And as such, different cooking methods, ingredients and flavours can be used to intrigue the senses when putting together a *shojin* meal.

In the following section, I have put together different menus based on the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. The recipes used seasonal items that could be found if you have access to Asian ingredients. Each season features two groups of five dishes, paired with the same soup and rice or noodle dish. For instance, the rice and soup on page 28 will be repeated on page 42. This is done deliberately for easy reference. While *shojin ryori* is often prepared as a set so that the meal is complete, it is perfectly fine to prepare just individual dishes.

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Spring



Spring always gives me a sense of new beginning. It is when the trees start to bud and flowers start to blossom. In the spring menu that follows, you will also notice that the dishes include many fresh spring vegetables.

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DAIKON ROLLS

Serves 4

120 g (4¹/₃ oz) daikon
Watermelon, as needed
Cucumber, as needed
8 sprigs coriander leaves
(cilantro)
4 Tbsp toasted and ground
sesame seeds (page 21)

CITRUS DRESSING

4 Tbsp orange juice
1 Tbsp lemon juice
2 Tbsp mirin
2 Tbsp rice vinegar
1 Tbsp raw sugar
1/3 tsp sea salt
1 tsp cornflour, mixed with
2 Tbsp water

Peel daikon and cut into half lengthwise. Using a vegetable slicer, cut daikon into thin slices, each about 10-cm (4-in) long. Make 8 such slices.

Cut watermelon into sticks, each about 5-cm (2-in) long and 1-cm (1/2-in) thick. Make 8 watermelon sticks.

Cut cucumber into sticks, each about 5-cm (2-in) long and 0.5-cm (1/4-in) thick. Prepare 16 cucumber sticks.

Prepare toasted and ground sesame seeds. Set aside.

To make citrus dressing, combine all ingredients except cornflour slurry in a saucepan and place over low heat. When mixture starts to boil, give cornflour slurry a stir and add to saucepan. Whisk to thicken dressing.

To assemble, place a watermelon stick, 2 cucumber sticks and a coriander stalk on each slice of daikon. Roll up and squeeze gently to help roll hold its shape. Dip one end of daikon roll in toasted and ground sesame seeds.

Arrange 2 daikon rolls on each dish. Serve with citrus dressing.

.....
To make a pretty daikon roll, have the coriander hanging out at one end and coat the other end with sesame seeds.

The daikon rolls can be secured with some of the dressing or with a toothpick.

Raw daikon is used in Japan to counter the taste of oily food. But more importantly, it has enzymes that aid digestion. This recipe has an interesting combination of various raw vegetables rolled into one, served with a refreshing citrus-flavoured thick sauce.



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The weather turns warm and you know summer has arrived. Vegetables in various hues and colours appear in the markets. In the summer menu that follows, you will find dishes brightened by these colourful summer vegetables.



Summer



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BROCCOLI with TOMATO

Serves 4

300 g (11 oz) broccoli
1 tsp sea salt

TOMATO SAUCE

1 medium tomato,
about 100 g (3½ oz)
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp rice vinegar
1 Tbsp Japanese soy sauce
¼ tsp sea salt
1 tsp raw sugar

Prepare tomato sauce. Cut tomato in half and remove and discard soft centre. Dice tomato and mix with olive oil, vinegar, soy sauce, salt and sugar. Set aside.

Trim broccoli to bite-size pieces. Boil a pot of water and add salt. Add broccoli stems and cook for 2 minutes. Add broccoli florets and boil for another 3 minutes. Remove and plunge into cold water to stop the cooking process. This will help the broccoli retain its fresh green colour and crunchy texture. Drain well.

Arrange broccoli on individual serving plates. Top with tomato sauce and serve.

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Do not overcook the broccoli or it will lose its taste and texture. Overcooked broccoli will also break apart easily. The stems take a longer time to cook, so put them into the pot to cook first.
.....

Broccoli is one of nature's wonder foods.

In this recipe, it is lightly cooked,
then topped with a refreshing tomato dressing.

Serve it arranged in small bowls.



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Autumn acts as a mediator between summer and winter. During this time, nature is coloured with different shades of red and yellow.

It is also during this time that I fall in love with *momiji* (Japanese red maple leaves) all over again.



Autumn



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YAMATOIMO NORI NUGGETS

Serves 4

150 g (5 $\frac{1}{3}$ oz) *yamatoimo*

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sheets nori (seaweed)

Vegetable oil for deep-frying

SAUCE

2.5-cm (1-in) knob ginger

2 tsp Japanese soy sauce

Prepare sauce. Peel and finely grate ginger, then squeeze to obtain 1 tsp ginger juice. Mix ginger juice and soy sauce. Set aside.

Peel *yamatoimo* and remove any black spots. Finely grate. Divide into 12 equal portions.

Cut nori into 12 equal pieces. (Cut the full sheet into eighths and the half-sheet into quarters.)

Place a portion of grated *yamatoimo* at one end of each nori piece. Roll up.

Heat the vegetable oil over medium heat. Slide the rolls into the hot oil and deep-fry for 1-2 minutes until light brown. Remove and drain.

Coat the nuggets with sauce and arrange on individual serving plates. Serve hot.

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When making these nuggets, do not roll them too tightly as the *yamatoimo* will expand upon frying and may overflow at both ends if the roll is too tight.
.....

Grated *yamatoimo* wrapped with nori and deep-fried is reminiscent of Japanese fishcake. The spongy texture of these nuggets goes well with the ginger sauce.



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Winter



Winter is filled with mystery and beauty.
Just as the cold keeps us indoors,
plants and animals go into hibernation as they
anticipate the start of a whole new cycle of seasons.



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WATER CHESTNUT NORI SQUARES

Serves 4

16 water chestnuts
1 sheet nori (seaweed)
Vegetable oil for deep-frying

Wash water chestnuts thoroughly, then peel and finely grate. Place in a fine sieve to drain.

Cut nori into 16 squares. Spread 1 tsp grated water chestnut onto each nori square.

Heat oil for deep-frying. Slip nori squares into hot oil and fry for about 2 minutes or until water chestnut mixture is golden brown. Remove and drain on absorbent paper.

Arrange on individual serving plates and serve immediately.

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The grated water chestnuts should not be completely dry before spreading on the nori squares. Squeeze it gently to remove any excess water if necessary.

The liquid from draining the water chestnuts can be served as a refreshing drink.

This dish is simple with some effort required for grating the water chestnuts. The sweetness of the water chestnuts is heightened by deep-frying, and this usually leaves my guests wondering if there was an extra ingredient added.

