

AHI TUNA NIGIRI

Nigiri is a type of sushi made with a slice of raw fish over pressed vinegared rice. Ahi Tuna makes for an exceptionally rich and flavorful nigiri. With its firm texture and a taste that's both meaty and delicate, it has a subtle sweetness and fresh, clean finish. When bitten into, the smooth, buttery tuna contrasts beautifully with the slightly tangy and firm sushi rice. The intention is to enjoy the purity and quality of the fish with minimal seasoning. This dish, when made correctly, can be a sublime sushi experience where the natural flavors are the centerpiece.

Ingredients

For the Sushi Rice (Shari):

- 2 cups sushi rice
- 2 cups water, plus extra for rinsing rice
- 1/2 cup rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt

For the Tuna Topping:

- 1/2 lb fresh Yellowfin Tuna (Ahi), sashimi-grade
- Wasabi paste (optional)

Accompaniments:

- Soy sauce for dipping
- Pickled ginger
- Additional wasabi paste

Instructions

Preparing Sushi Rice:

1. **Rinse the Rice:** Begin by rinsing the sushi rice under cold water until the water runs clear. This removes excess starch from the surface which would otherwise make the rice too sticky.
2. **Cook the Rice:** Place the rinsed rice along with 2 cups of water into a rice cooker or a medium saucepan. If using a saucepan, bring the water to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook for about 20 minutes or until water is absorbed and rice is tender.
3. **Season the Rice:** While the rice cooks, heat the rice vinegar, sugar, and salt in a small saucepan until the sugar dissolves. Let the mixture cool. When the rice is done, transfer it into a large bowl (preferably wooden sushi bowl – Hangiri) and spread it out to cool down quickly. Sprinkle the vinegar mix over the rice and fold it into the rice with a wooden spatula. This process should be done with care to avoid crushing the rice grains. The rice should be shiny with a slight tartness. Let it cool to room temperature before assembling your sushi.

Preparing Ahi Tuna and Assembling Nigiri:

1. **Slice the Tuna:** With a very sharp sushi knife, begin slicing the Ahi Tuna into 1/4 inch thick slices against the grain. Each slice should be approximately 2 inches long and 1 inch wide, just enough to drape over the rice.
2. **Shape the Rice:** Moisten your hands with water mixed with a bit of rice vinegar to prevent sticking. Take about a tablespoon of rice (about 20 grams) and shape it into an oblong form with your hands. The rice should be compact enough to hold together, but not so firm that it becomes dense.
3. **Wasabi (optional):** If you choose to use wasabi, place a small amount, about the size of a match head, onto each slice of tuna.
4. **Assemble the Nigiri:** Gently press a slice of the Ahi Tuna onto the shaped rice. The wasabi between the fish and rice will act as a glue. The fish should drape over the length of the rice.
5. **Serving:** Arrange the completed nigiri on a serving platter. Serve with pickled ginger and a small dish of soy sauce along with additional wasabi if desired.

When tasting Ahi Tuna Nigiri, you'll experience the warmth of the vinegared rice paired with the cool, fresh taste of the tuna. The distinct texture of the rice complements the silky tuna without competing with its flavor. Pair with a sip of green tea or a dry sake to enhance the experience.

Temperature Notes

Sushi rice should be used at body temperature. Fish for sushi, especially tuna, should be fresh and kept at a cool temperature, just above freezing, until it's time to serve.

Sushi is as much an art as it is a culinary dish. The quality of ingredients is paramount; always choose the freshest sashimi-grade fish you can find and take care with the assembly for the best experience.