

Song P'yon

Pine Needle-Scented Rice Cakes

Servings: about 30 rice cakes

This kind of rice cake is a Chusok tradition. There are many variations to the dough, the filling, and even the preparation style ... each family adds their own special touch. What follows is just one example. We recommend buying the rice flour and sesame seeds from a Korean market.

The Ingredients

Filling

3 T toasted sesame seeds
3 T dark brown sugar
1 T short-grain Korean rice flour

Dough

3 cups short-grain Korean rice flour
1-2 pinches of salt
Up to ½ cup hot water

Also needed for cooking

2 cups pine needles, fresh-picked, washed and patted dry
Cheesecloth or muslin

What to Do with Them

To make the filling, mix sesame seeds, brown sugar, and rice flour in small bowl.

In another bowl, combine rice flour and salt and mix thoroughly.
Add hot water, 1 spoonful at a time, stirring until a cornmeal-like consistency.
Knead into soft, marshmallow-like dough (takes a while).
Cover dough with clean, damp kitchen cloth to keep moist and pliable.

Pinch out a walnut-sized piece of dough and knead into ball.
With your finger, form a pouch in the ball and fill it with ½ teaspoon of the filling.
Seal it back up and mold into plump half-moon shape, about 2 inches long.
Set aside under damp cloth.
Repeat with remaining dough, making about 30 cakes.

Cook these as soon as possible, as they dry out quickly.
To cook, spread half of the pine needles in a steamer lined with cheesecloth or muslin.
Place the cakes on top of pine needles, set ½ inch apart in a single layer.
Cover with the remaining pine needles and steam for about 12 minutes.
Quickly dunk rice cakes in bowl of cool water to rinse.
Discard pine needles and transfer cakes to a bowl.
Serve immediately.