

Recipe: Miso Soup

Healing Foundations Naturopathic Clinic, Winter 2008

Makes 4 servings

Time: 15min

Best made with flakes of dried bonito (a dark, full-flavoured fish) and kelp (sea vegetable), both readily available at Asian Markets, but the soup is still delicious without them. Miso can be bought as a paste at any health food store. If you buy an organic jar (450g) of miso you are looking at about \$10.00. Very worth the expense given 3 tablespoons will make a soup that serves four and its nutritional value and great taste makes it indispensable.

- 4 cups water or chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 (3-4inch) piece of kelp
- ¼ cup dried bonito flakes
- If you use the kelp and bonito flakes it is best to start with water or vegetable stock.
- 3 tablespoons of miso paste, any variety
- ½ pound silken tofu or cooked chicken chopped into small cubes
- 2 scallions, finely minced

- Place water and kelp in a small saucepan and bring to a boil; turn the heat to the lowest possible setting (the broth should stay hot but not boil from this point on). Put the bonito flakes in a tea ball or bag made of cheesecloth and place in the pan. Let sit for 5 minutes then remove the kelp and bonito.
- If you are using chicken stock, omit the kelp, bonito flakes, and water, and begin by heating the chicken stock to the boiling point and then turning the heat to very low.
- Put the miso in a small bowl; add 3 tablespoons of the broth and blend with a fork or wire whisk until it is smooth.
- Stir the miso mixture into the soup. Turn off the heat or keep it very low once you add the miso. Boiling will destroy the beneficial nutrients in the miso.
- Add the tofu or chicken and scallions. Let sit for 1 minute before serving.

This soup has excellent health benefits for the whole family. The basic recipe with vegetable broth or chicken stock and miso paste is quick, easy and tasty. If your children like soy sauce they will love miso soup because it has a rich salty flavour. You can make the soup in the morning and put it in a thermos for a warm nutritious lunch or snack during the work or school day. Miso is an excellent source of protein and electrolytes so a warm mug full before or after winter sports is a must try. Our family packs a thermos of miso broth for cross country skiing and winter hiking days.

The Benefits of Miso:

Miso is a fermented form of soybean. It is the process of fermentation, pervasively employed with great wisdom in Japan that makes the benefits of the soybean possible. The fermentation process itself makes the proteins in the soybean readily digestible and absorbable. There are compounds in the soybean that when converted through the fermentation process, become powerful anti-carcinogens. For example: A study published in Nutr Cancer 1990, Department of Nutrition Sciences, University of Alabama, Birmingham, showed that the culturing process of soy led to “a significantly lower number of cancers per animal” and a “lower growth rate of cancer compared to controls”. The data presented suggests that miso consumption may be a factor in producing lower breast cancer rates in Japanese women. Furthermore, consider the following words of praise from Dr. Shinichiro Akizuki, director of the St. Francis Hospital in Nagasaki. From the *The Book of Miso*:

“I believe that miso belongs to the highest class of medicines, those which help prevent disease and strengthen the body through continued usage....”

Note: Regular soy milk, tofu and soy protein isolates found in baby formula, protein bars, shakes and soy based vegetarian foods are not nearly as nutritious as fermented soy products like miso.

References:

- How to Cook Everything - Simple Recipes for Great Food. Mark Bittman 1998
- The Life Bridge – The way to longevity with probiotic nutrients. Richard Sarnat, M.D., Pauls Schulick, and Thomas M. Newmark.