

Yaoya-san in El Cerrito, where the mostly Japanese shoppers and low prices ensure a quick turnover, is my favorite place to shop for saké. They have a range of sakés, on the same shelves as shojū and plum wines. Try the *Kuromatsu-Hakushika* in the foamed, blue-glass bottle; it's a light, low-acidity junmai ginjo that goes fabulously with some steamed rice, sashimi, and radishes, which you can find in every shade in the refrigerated cabinet across the store. Tokyo Fish Market, in Albany, carries a larger number of sakés, like the hard-to-find *Watari Bune*, an 85 percent daiginjo with luscious pineapple overtones. The *Wakatake Daiginjo* is about half the price, and has an earthy elegance. You'll find sakés with interesting names like "running water" and "naïve innocence" both of which are handmade in small batches and have clean,

slow finishes. Ranch 99 Market, Richmond/El Cerrito border, is a huge shopping center and grocery store where you'll find the largest selection of sakés. Well-priced seafood and sashimi-quality fish make this a regular stop for me. Going to Ranch 99 is an experience in and of itself, so spend a while perusing the aisles and exploring many kinds of Asian specialties. You'll be able to find ingredients and libations for your home-saké experience at all of these great markets.

In the summer months, lighter ginjo sakés go best in the sunshine outside and a fresh fish salad like my Mikan Tilapia, served on top of lightly dressed microgreens. Enjoy this recipe and invent your own, inspired by the ancient, delectable drink of Japan. ☪

MIKAN TILAPIA

This recipe is a wonderful light summer salad that brings out the flavors of the mizuna (Japanese mustard green) with citrus and the crispy fish. Mikan is the Japanese word for orange, one of the handful of words I've managed to remember after living there for some time several years ago. Mizuna is easy to grow in your garden, and is ready for harvest in only a few weeks. The use of oat bran instead of panko breadcrumbs gives this dish more nutrition and fiber. It can be served as a light lunch, or as a complement to another dish for a heartier meal.

2 tilapia filets, cut into approximately 15 2-inch pieces
2/3 cup organic canola oil

1 egg

1 tablespoon fume furikake (Japanese seasoning containing bonito and nori)

3 tablespoons sesame seeds, black or white

1/3 cup ottogi Korean pancake mix or
okonomiyaki Japanese pancake mix

pinch of kosher salt

5 tablespoons oat bran

1 bunch mizuna

1 bunch baby spinach leaves

1 orange

1/3–1/2 Japanese cucumber

DRESSING

3 tablespoons orange juice with pulp

Juice of 1 small lemon

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon rice vinegar

1 tablespoon honey, room-temperature

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Kosher salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste

Whisk the egg in a bowl with the fume furikake and set aside. Combine the pancake mix, oat bran, sesame seeds, and the



pinch of salt on a plate. In a medium cast-iron skillet put the heat on medium-high and add the canola oil. When a spritz of water makes the oil bubble, use cooking chopsticks to dip each piece of tilapia in the egg mixture and then the flour mixture on both sides. Place no more than 6 pieces of fish in the oil at once, or the oil temperature will change and the fish won't cook evenly. Cook each piece for about one minute on each side, or until crispy and golden brown. Transfer to a plate lined with a towel to absorb excess oil.

In a bowl that won't be used as the serving dish, add washed, chopped mizuna and spinach and add cucumbers, cut into lengthwise slivers. Section the orange and add to salad mixture. Toss with salt and pepper. In the salad bowl itself, emulsify the lemon juice, rice vinegar, and olive oil by slowly pouring the oil into the lemon and vinegar while whisking quickly. Then add the honey, mustard, and orange juice and whisk until evenly blended. This is not a thick dressing. Set about half of the mixture aside. Place the greens, orange, and cucumber in the salad bowl and toss with the dressing. Serve dressed greens on each plate and top with 4 or 5 pieces of the fish. Pour 1/3 of the remaining dressing over each plate and serve. Serves 3.