Condiments, Dressings, and Side Dishes
Favorite Camp Recipes

Julia Ferré

Condiments are to brown rice what dressings are to salads and side dishes are to meals—that is—the adornment. Like butter to bread or salsa to chips, condiments, dressings, and side dishes are a natural extension—the finishing touch that boosts flavor, peaks color, and supplies additional complement.

Condiments, dressings, and side dishes are more than just a perk. They can be used to create another dimension to meals—the dimension of balance. Balance in meals is more than just the presence of complex carbohydrates, complete proteins, and quality fats. Balance is more than aligning foods and techniques with the season. Balance includes the theory of energetics, the ideas of yin and yang in sync with the season, one’s personal health, and the choices of foods and preparation styles in order to enhance one’s well being. It need not be hit and miss to be healthy. It can be a conscious choice—a choice that involves commonsense ideas with the inclusion of specific foods for support.

Macrobiotic teaching emphasizes the need to “lighten” up for summer by utilizing fresh foods and less cooking. Summer is hot—a yang time of year—so the advice is to avoid excess yang and to incorporate quality yin things. It is often taught that one needs to avoid excess heaviness such as concentrated foods or dishes high in fat and/or salt. I do this through choosing salads over long-cooked vegetable dishes, serving a higher percentage of vegetables to grains, and preparing grains and beans in the morning before the day gets really hot.

When I began macrobiotics I was under the impression that one should use less miso, soy sauce, salt, and oil in the summer in order to fit with the idea of “lightening”—the theory that salty foods and frying in oil are “too yangizing” for summer. Imagine my shock when I saw Cornelia Aihara preparing oily miso condiment, a dish consisting of oil and miso with a tad of water or lemon juice, in the summer. Why such a heavy yang dish in the hot time of year?

Cornelia told me that when the season turns hot, it is very tempting to eat a lot of fruit or drink a lot of juices or beer—items that if taken in excess can be depleting or weakening, or in her words, “too yin.” One must learn how to use foods to create vitality in the summer, or in her words, “strong cooking is needed in summer too.” She felt oily miso was such an energy-providing dish, and she would prepare it at all times of the year or for special need. For instance, after I delivered my second baby, she made me a batch of oily miso to help in the recovery. Oily miso provides good-quality oil in combination with good-quality miso. It is served one-half to one teaspoon on top of a thick round of boiled daikon or raw cucumber, depending on season, and is pleasing in taste, presentation, and yin-yang bal-
Miso, umeboshi, and soy sauce are concentrated foods and when used in condiments, dressings, and side dishes, one can benefit from their strength while not having to make the entire meal too salty or heavy. Remember that salt is needed in summer. If we drink more water in the summer, which is a good idea when active, outside a lot, or living in a dry climate, we are naturally "lightening" through carrying more water volume; salt is necessary to maintain the sodium/potassium ratio in the blood. In addition, we perspire more in the summer and need to replace the salt that is eliminated.

The following condiments, dressings, and side dishes provide a quality factor to meals. Miso, umeboshi, and soy sauce provide quality salt. Olive oil, sesame oil, and tahini provide quality fat. Sea vegetables provide quality minerals. The condiments below are moist condiments intended to be served on top of or alongside foods. Recipes for dry condiments using umeboshi were published in *Macrobiotics Today* in the January/February, 2005 issue. The following dressings top vegetables—cooked or raw as in salad. The side dishes are flavorful adornments for meals, although not as concentrated as condiments.

All of these recipes are served at French Meadows camp together with a full menu of grains, beans, and vegetables.

**CONDIMENTS**

These three condiments are flavorful and powerful—a little goes a long way. Oily Miso and Nori Condiment are served at camp at the same meal with a variety of other items—pea soup, crackers and peanut butter, brown rice, cooked cabbage, and cucumbers. The Oily Miso is served on top of rounds of boiled daikon radish.

The Nori Condiment has an appearance different from any other food—and many other people—have ever eaten. It is usually greeted with a surprise and a question as to what it is. It looks like mush; yet the flavor is delicious and it is devoured—none is leftover.

The Kombu and Shiitake Condiment is made at camp after first making clear soup to serve with soba noodles. To make 4 cups of soup, add a 4-inch piece of kombu and 2 shiitake mushrooms to 4 cups of cold water. Bring to a boil and then remove kombu and shiitake mushrooms. Add 4 tablespoons of soy sauce. The menu includes soba, clear soup, scallion garnish, blanched broccoli, fried tofu, kombu and shiitake condiment, and dill pickle.

**OILY MISO—YIELD: ¼ CUP**

1 Tbsp sesame oil
3 Tbsp dark miso, such as barley miso
1 Tbsp lemon juice

Heat oil. Add miso. Sauté until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes, stirring constantly to smooth lumps. Add liquid gradually, thinning to desired consistency.

**NORI CONDIMENT—YIELD: 1½ CUPS**

10 sheets nori
2 cups water
4 to 5 tsp soy sauce

Tear nori into 1-inch squares. Soak in water for 10 to 15 minutes. Add soy sauce, cover pan, and bring to a boil. Simmer over low heat for 15 minutes. Serve 1 to 2 tablespoons per serving. This will keep for a week stored in the refrigerator.

Note: To serve this condiment with other menus, choose dishes with a variety of texture and colors, such as brown rice, chickpeas, blanched broccoli, and almonds; or udon, onion soup, scrambled tofu, and crisp salad.

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CONDIMENT

KOMBU AND SHIITAKE

CONDIMENT—YIELD: ¼ CUP

4-inch piece kombu, reserved from making soup
2 shiitake mushrooms, reserved from making soup
1 cup water
1 1/2 tsp soy sauce

Cut kombu into very thin matchsticks. Discard the stem from shiitake and slice the cap into thin crescents. Add the cut kombu and shiitake mushrooms to water and soy sauce. Cover pan, bring to a boil, and simmer 30 minutes over low heat. Remove lid and boil away any remaining liquid.

To make this condiment without first making soup, soak kombu and shiitake mushrooms prior to cutting. Soak separately, each in 1 cup of water for 15 to 25 minutes. Drain, reserve soaking water, and then proceed as above, using the reserved soaking water to cook the condiment.

DRESSINGS

These three dressings include umeboshi plums or umeboshi vinegar. Umeboshi is a tonic in summer, providing digestive strength for the body and a refreshing taste and addition to green vegetables; the citric acid of umeboshi helps in calcium absorption. The flavor of umeboshi is enhanced with olive oil or tahini as featured below.

The Olive Oil and Umeboshi Vinegar Dressing is delicious on many foods. I use it to dress salads or dab kale; one son douses brown rice; another son drenches pasta! A variation of this dressing is featured in the Brown Rice Salad published in Macrobiotics Today, May/June 2007. This salad is served at camp along with chickpeas, almonds, kale, dill pickle, and miso soup.

The Cucumber Relish was inspired from one of Cornellia Aihara’s quick pickle recipes she prepared at camp. It is served with the meal with fresh whole-wheat chapatis made in the bread baking class presented by Chuck Lowery of Pacific Bakery, Yeast Free. Also in this menu are humus, brown rice, green beans and light vegetable soup.

The Cucumber Salsa is served at camp with pinto beans, polenta, salad with tahini lemon ume salad dressing (as above). This salsa is delicious, moist, and tomato-free! At camp, a tomato-based salsa is also available; however, the cucumber salsa usually disappears first.

Simmer plums in water 5 to 10 minutes or until soft. Remove pits and puree plums in suribachi with the cooking liquid. Add minced onion and let sit 15 to 20 minutes. Add olive oil, lemon juice, and dill. Taste and adjust flavorings. Gently mix with salad.

TAHINI LEMON UME SALAD DRESSING—for 8 cups vegetables. Yield: ¼ cup

4 Tbsp tahini
1 Tbsp umeboshi vinegar
1 Tbsp lemon juice
2 to 3 Tbsp water

Cream tahini with umeboshi vinegar; add lemon juice and water in increments until thinned to desired consistency. Brands of tahini vary so adjust liquid content accordingly.

SIDE DISHES

These three side dishes are served at camp and utilize cucumbers. The Wakame Orange Cucumber Salad is a refreshing summer dish best made in small quantities and eaten fresh. At camp, it is served in the same meal as Buckwheat Salad (recipe in Macrobiotics Today, May/June 2007), kale, chickpeas, sautéed yellow squash, and miso soup.

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**Wakame Orange Cucumber Salad—Yield: 2 1/2 cups**

1 six-inch piece of wakame, soaked in 1 cup water, will swell to 2 Tbsp

**Dressing**
- 1 tsp roasted sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp brown rice vinegar
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp red onion, finely minced
- 2 Tbsp minced celery
- 1 cucumber, thin quarter rounds, 2 cups
- 2 Tbsp parsley, finely chopped
- 1 small orange, chopped, 1/2 cup

Soak wakame 10 minutes. Drain. Separate leaves from stems. Chop leaves into 1/2-inch pieces. Reserve stems and soaking water for soup. Mix dressing. Fold wakame leaves and red onion in dressing and let stand 5 minutes; then mix with rest of ingredients.

**Cucumber Relish—Yield: About 2 cups**

1 cucumber, finely cut, 2 cups
2 scallions, finely chopped, 1/2 cup
1/4 cup parsley, finely minced

**Dressing**
- 1 1/2 tsp toasted sesame oil
- 3 tsp soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tsp ginger juice
- 1 1/2 tsp lemon juice

Cut all vegetables; mix dressing in bowl, add to vegetables and mix well. Taste and adjust seasonings if needed. Serve on lettuce leaves.

**Cucumber Salsa—Yield: 4 cups**

1 large cucumber, chopped, 3 cups
1 lime, juiced, 5 tsp
1 red onion, minced, 1 cup
1 stalk celery, finely minced, 1/4 cup
4 Tbsp finely minced cilantro
4 Tbsp finely minced parsley
1 Tbsp ume vinegar

Combine all ingredients and let stand at least 1 hour before serving, stirring once or twice.

Julia Ferré, author of Basic Macrobiotic Cooking, coordinates the children's program and plans the menus at French Meadows camp. She lives in Chico, California with Carl and their four boys.