

One Bowl Wonder

The Japanese donburi or rice bowl truly is a one bowl wonder. The Japanese make cooking for one a simple affair. It is partly the mindset of simplicity and partly a frugal approach to eating that is not only healthy and economical but practical when your fridge contents don't look that promising. Probably one of my favorite one bowl wonders is oyakodon, *don* referring to the rice bowl and *oyako*, meaning parent and child, which in this dish refers to the chicken and egg. It is a very comforting dish and can be made with one chicken thigh fillet or even left over cooked chicken. All you need is a bowl of a rice, an egg, onion or a couple of spring onions, your chicken and the usual suspects of the Japanese pantry; dashi stock powder, soy sauce and mirin. Cook your Japanese rice and while it is resting gently fry the onion and the chicken pieces (if using cooked chicken you just need to heat it), add 100 ml dashi stock and a tablespoon each of soy and mirin. Bring that to the simmer and then turn off the heat. Put your hot rice into a rice bowl then gently beat the egg in a small bowl with your chopsticks. Pour it onto the still hot chicken, mix it through quickly and then scrape it immediately onto the rice. You want the egg to retain a creamy texture. Done.

For a vegetarian donburi I use silken tofu, a couple of spring onions, one shiitaki mushroom and maybe something green like a handful of shaved Savoy cabbage, some spinach leaves or a few small florets of broccoli. For the sauce I like the one used for the dish, mapo tofu. For one serve you just need a dessert spoon each of sweet chili sauce, oyster sauce, soy, mirin and water. You can also add a teaspoon of miso. Simmer a small block of silken tofu in water for 5 minutes, drain it in a sieve and let it cool to firm it up a bit before cutting into cubes. Fry the sliced onion and shiitaki, mix in the sauce and the vegetable, letting it cook for 2-5 minutes,

depending on what vegetable you are using and then finally add the tofu and heat it gently. Add to the top of your rice bowl. Done.

The most important part of these frugal meals is the rice. Japanese short grain rice is really beautiful and once you try it you will find it hard to go back to other types. I recommend getting a big bag from an Asian grocery that stocks Japanese goods. For one-person cooking using a small cast-iron enameled casserole dish, like Le Creuset, is the best way to prepare the rice or alternately you can buy a small ceramic Japanese rice pot at a specialty store. A rice cooker is useful when cooking for more people. For one person you only need 90 grams of rice.

To prepare your rice. Weigh out 90 grams of rice and then wash it in a sieve under running water, moving your fingers through the grains to saturate them with water. Put the rice into the cast-iron pot along with 110 mls of water and leave that to soak for about 30 minutes. Heat the rice and when it starts to boil, cover with the lid and place the dish on the lowest heat setting possible for 13 minutes. Once the time is up turn the heat off and rest the rice for a further 13 minutes. During that 13 minutes of rest time you can cook the topping for your one bowl wonder. Use a plastic or wooden paddle to transfer big scoops of the rice to your rice bowl. It should be a little bit sticky and hold together nicely, so it is easy to eat with chopsticks. Cooking the rice until it is just right might take a few goes but once you get the hang of it you can virtually do it blindfolded. If you are concerned about eating too much white rice, try brown rice for a change or add some mixed grains or cooked adzuki beans to the rice. Grain mixes for rice can also be purchased at Japanese grocers.

[Tokyo Hometown Supermarket, Elizabeth Street, Melbourne](#)

[Suzuran, Camberwell](#)

[Hinoki, Fitzroy](#)

[Fuji Mart, South Yarra](#)

