

# Japanese Chicken and Egg Themes

I first encountered tsukune, a BBQ minced chicken skewer, in a yakitori joint in Kyoto. The tsukune was served with a raw egg yolk in a little dish in which to dip the skewered chicken meatball. The unctuousness of the egg was beautiful with the salty, tender chicken. I loved the place and that dish so much we revisited it a couple of times. Depending where you live and the state of your poultry industry eating raw egg may alarm some people but if eggs are safe for making mayonnaise, as they are in Australia, and the eggs are fresh, then I would have no qualms in eating a raw egg. This chicken and egg or "mother and child" theme is a feature in Japanese cooking, exemplified by oyakudon, a homely dish of chicken pieces in soy and dashi on a rice bowl with the raw egg just cooked from the heat of the rice. An easy one bowl meal of chicken and egg deliciousness. Chicken soup with egg ribbons, raw egg mixed through the hot soup, is another lovely mother and child combination. A Japanese chicken curry or ramen noodle dish is often topped with a soft boiled egg and another variation on a theme is soboro don, a rice bowl with ground chicken and scrambled egg. With summer ahead of us I recommend trying tsukune as part of your BBQ feast. While tsukune is traditionally cooked on a Japanese charcoal BBQ, yakitori style, with the ends of the skewers on metal rests, you can make a good approximation of this on a Weber with a couple of pieces of 20 mm squared section steel (available at Bunnings or your local hardware). Having this arrangement ensures the meat does not actually touch the grill and is gently cooked over the heat to retain tenderness and importantly it stops scorching of the yakitori sauce used for basting. The steel sections also stop the skewers from burning, avoiding the need to cover the exposed ends in aluminum foil. Overall, a win win

situation.

For the recipe I'll send you to [JustOneCookbook](#), my favorite version of tsukune, where rather than adding potato starch or other additives to help the meatballs stick together Nami has a clever solution which emphasizes the flavour of chicken. Her version is the closest to that great yakitori joint in Kyoto. A minimalist recipe using quality ingredients is the key to a great tsukune. I recommend using Milawa free range chicken thighs, skin removed, and mincing it yourself through a coarse die. You can put the spring onions and green perilla (shiso) through the mincer at the same time. Failing that ask a butcher to mince some skinless chicken thighs for you.

