

Ohagi

"An" sweet bean paste:

1. Cover 1 lb. dry azuki beans with plenty of water and bring to a boil.
2. Lower the heat to medium and continue to cook.
3. When the beans have absorbed water and the wrinkles of the bean skins have disappeared, drain the beans in a colander. Change the water.
4. Cover the beans with plenty of water again using three times as much water as beans. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat to medium low and cook, removing any scum and adding water as needed to keep the beans covered until they have cooled and are very tender. (About 1 ½ hour).
5. Drain the beans in a colander with a dish towel lining it. Gather up the ends of the towel and squeeze out the water. Sometimes smooth "an" settles as sediment in the bottom of the pot of water that has drained through the cloth. You can use this once you pour off the water, too.
6. Whirl the beans in a blender or food processor until they become a smooth paste.
7. Place the bean puree in a large pot, add 1 ¾-2 cups sugar and 1/8 tsp. salt, and cook over medium heat, stirring with a wooden spoon. First the sugar will dissolve and make the "an" thin but as it cooks it will become thick again. Keep stirring as you cook. Cool and use for ohagi or freeze for other manju. Makes about 5-6 cups of "an."

Note: You can also buy it already made as "red bean paste mused" in plastic bags. I have used Takaokaya Brand.

Rice: Wash 2 ½ cups sweet rice and ½ cup Nishiki medium grain rice. Add a dash of salt when you add back 3 cups of water. Cook. When cool make small rice balls and cover with "an".

Recipe From: Cathy Nakamura
Nakayoshi Gakko
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