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# Mirin (Japanese Sweet Rice Wine)

 [4 comments](#)**Author:** [Namiko Hirasawa Chen](#) · **Published:** Apr 7, 2022 · **Updated:** Sep 9, 2024

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*Mirin is a sweet rice wine widely used in Japanese cooking. Learn what mirin is used for, the different types of mirin, recommended brands, where to buy it, substitutions, and more!*





Mirin (みりん, 味醂) is a rice-based condiment commonly used in Japanese cooking to impart a subtly sweet and mildly acidic flavor to dishes. It is often found in sauces, glazes, and marinades.



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# What is Mirin (Japanese Sweet Rice Wine)

Mirin (みりん, 味醂), or sweet rice wine, is a sweet and syrupy liquid used as a seasoning and glazing agent. Like [soy sauce](#), it is one of the most essential condiments in Japanese cuisine. Similar to sake, mirin is also a type of rice wine but with a lower alcohol content (14% instead of 20%). We use this sweet rice wine in everything from [teriyaki salmon](#) to [hot pots](#) to [donburi rice bowls](#).

## What Does It Taste Like

Mirin offers a delicate sweetness and a pleasant aroma to many Japanese dishes. The sweetness comes from fermentation, where the rice starch converts into sugar.

## How To Use

Mirin **tenderizes** the ingredients you cook with and **adds a mild sweetness** to the overall flavor of the dishes. A deeper body and umami also help mask the smell of fish and seafood and allow the flavors to “sink in” to the dish better.

The sugar and alcohol content also prevents the ingredients from disintegrating. We often pair it with soy sauce and sake to make marinades for meat or seafood dishes.

Lastly, mirin **adds luster to ingredients** as a finishing touch, which is why it is crucial in [teriyaki sauce](#).

Contrary to some non-authentic recipes, mirin is not an ingredient for making sushi rice, which uses rice vinegar or seasoned sushi vinegar.



Mirin is a must for Homemade Teriyaki Sauce

## Different Types of Mirin

In general, there are four types: **hon mirin** (“real” mirin, 本みりん), **mirin** (みりん), **mirin-like condiment** (みりん風調味料), and **mirin-type condiment** (みりんタイプ調味料).

### Hon-Mirin





**Hon mirin** (本みりん), also known as **true mirin**, contains 14% alcohol and 0% salt. It is made from steamed glutinous rice, rice koji mold, and **shochu** (a distilled alcoholic beverage), which is mixed and fermented for about 40 to 60 days.

Enzymes in rice koji decompose starch and proteins of glutinous rice, producing various saccharides, amino acids, organic acids, and fragrance ingredients, resulting in the formation of Mirin.

Hon mirin has a higher alcohol content; it can be stored in a cool place for up to three months. If stored in the refrigerator, the sugar may crystallize and sink to the bottom, but it's still usable.



In Japanese grocery stores, you can find imported hon mirin (a bit pricey). Some popular hon mirin might have been imported from Japan to Japanese markets overseas, including [Fukurajun Hon Mirin](#) (picture on the left), [Hinode Hon Mirin](#), [Kokonoe Sakura](#), and [Mikawa Mirin](#) (picture on the right).

## Mirin



The main difference between mirin and *hon-mirin* is the usage of **sake** in mirin instead of *shochu*.

You can purchase [Takara Mirin](#) [↗](#), which includes sake (made with rice, water, koji mold, and yeast), glucose, and corn syrup (No *High Fructose Corn Syrup* is used).

- [Takara Mirin](#) [↗](#) (Takara)
- [Manjo Hon Mirin](#) [↗](#) (Kikkoman) (white mirin)

For those looking for mirin without high fructose corn syrup or corn syrup, we recommend [Eden Foods Mirin](#) [↗](#), which contains only water, rice, koji, and sea salt in the ingredient lists.

## Mirin-style Condiments





**Mirin-style condiments** (みりんタイプ調味料、みりんタイプ醸造調味料) are cheaper alternative products that resemble the taste of mirin. They are often labeled as aji-mirin (sweet cooking rice seasoning), which means “taste like mirin,” and contain 8-14% alcohol and 2% salt. They are made of starch or glucose syrup, water, alcohol, rice, and salt.

Kikkoman aji-mirin is a famous brand at many Asian and mainstream grocery stores, including Walmart and Target.

- [Kikkoman Manjo Aji-Mirin](#) 

## Mirin-like or Mirin-fu Condiment



**Mirin-like condiment** (みりん風調味料) contains **no alcohol** or less than 1% alcohol and less than 1% salt. It is made of starch syrup, rice/cultured rice brewed seasoning, brewed vinegar, and acidic components. The mirin-like condiment is cheaper because it avoids certain alcohol taxes.

It claims to have the same taste as hon mirin and can enhance the flavors and texture.

It needs to be refrigerated after opening and used within three months.

- [Honteri](#) (Mizkan) – **No alcohol**
- [Kotteri Mirin](#) (Kikkoman)
- [Kotterin](#) (Kikkoman)

## Where To Buy

You can buy mirin from Japanese grocery stores, Korean grocery stores, Asian supermarkets, or online. Amazon carries a few options:

- [Kikkoman Mirin Sweet Cooking Sake](#) 
- [Eden Foods Mirin](#)  – No corn syrup
- [Lotte Korean Cooking Rice Wine](#) 

I use mirin from Takara Mirin. Other online stores, such as Umami Insider, offer imported mirin-type seasoning.

## How to Store

Hon mirin has more alcohol; therefore, it can be stored in a dark, cool place for up to 3 months. If you store it in the refrigerator, the sugar may crystallize.

Mirin-like condiments contain less alcohol; therefore, store them in the refrigerator and use them within three months.

## Substitutions

You can substitute mirin with sake and sugar, although the taste will be different. The ratio of sake and sugar is **3 to 1**. For example, mix  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (or 1 Tbsp) of quality drinking sake with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (or 1 tsp) of granulated sugar.

I don't recommend using dry white or sweet marsala wine or dry sherry to replace mirin as they have a more pronounced taste and a more robust alcohol percentage. You can substitute with dry white wine when a recipe calls for sake, but not mirin. Sweet Marsala wine has hints of grape flavor and will overpower the authentic taste.

# Frequently Asked Questions

Any recommendations for halal substitutions?



Can I use Shaoxing wine as a substitute?



Do you have mirin without corn syrup?



Can I use rice vinegar instead of mirin?



## Recipes Using Mirin





Use mirin in sauces, seasonings, marinades, broths, and glazes. It pairs well with meat, fish and seafood, tofu, vegetables, and rice dishes. A little goes a long way.

- [Mirin Salmon](#)
- [Sukiyaki Sauce](#)
- [Ramen Eggs](#)
- [Tempura Dipping Sauce](#)
- [Beef Udon](#)
- [Agedashi Tofu](#)

## Differences Between Sake and Mirin



Sake and mirin are frequently used together in a recipe for Japanese cuisine.

**Sake** contains higher alcohol and lower sugar, while **mirin** has a higher sugar and lower alcohol content. Mirin can be used untreated in a dish, whereas sake is often added earlier in cooking to allow some alcohol to evaporate.

To learn more about the difference between sake and mirin, [click here](#).

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## Spotlight: 6 Must-Have Condiments to Make Your Favorite Japanese Food



Here are the [6 must-have condiments](#) to start making your favorite Japanese food at home.

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**Editor's Note:** This post was originally published on January 23, 2012. The post has been updated with new content and republished on April 7, 2022.

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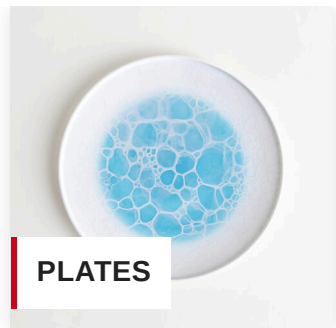
## About Namiko Hirasawa Chen

I'm Nami, the recipe developer and founder of Just One Cookbook. I was born and raised in Yokohama, Japan, and now live in San Francisco with my family. Here, you will find easy and authentic Japanese recipes you'll love and enjoy!

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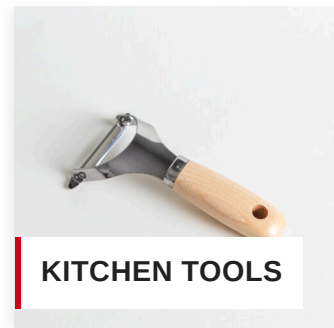
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#### 4 COMMENTS

**Marco** 1 month ago

Hi,

Do you have a recommendation for alcohol-free sake by any chance? I'm cooking for my kids, so using regular sake and mirin is not an option for me. Contrary to popular belief, alcohol does not evaporate quickly during cooking (in fact, it takes several hours of cooking to remove it completely). I was lucky to find honteri mirin in an Asian supermarket nearby, but I haven't been able to find alcohol-free sake yet. Does it even exist?

 0 Reply**Naomi (JOC Community Manager)** Admin Reply to [Marco](#)  1 month ago



Hello, Marco. Thank you for reading Nami's post.

Unfortunately, we have not seen any alcohol-free sake. However, in most recipes, you can just skip it or substitute water or Dashi for Sake.

We hope this helps! 😊

👍 0

↩ Reply

**Marco**

💬 Reply to [Naomi \(JOC Community Manager\)](#) ⌚ 1 month ago

Hello Naomi,

Thank you for your kind reply. I tried substituting it with Dashi like you suggested, and most recipes taste just as good!

👍 0

↩ Reply

**Naomi (JOC Community Manager)** Admin

💬 Reply to [Marco](#) ⌚ 1 month ago

Hello Marco! We are so happy to hear it worked great for you too! 😊

Thank you for sharing your experience with us. Happy Cooking!

👍 0

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