

Onigiri Rice Balls

Learn to make authentic Japanese onigiri rice balls with this easy recipe. Perfect portable snack with customizable fillings and nori wrapping.

20 min

PREP

50 min

COOK

1h 10min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Medium

DIFFICULTY

Onigiri Rice Balls

Ingredients

- 100 g rice
- 6 cup water
- 4 nori seaweed sheet
- 1 pinch sea salt
- 3 tbsp sesame
- 1 cup rice vinegar

Instructions

1 Prepare the Rice

Rinse 100g short-grain rice in a fine-mesh strainer under cold running water until the water runs clear, about 2-3 minutes of rinsing.

2 Combine the rinsed rice with 6 cups water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a rolling boil over high heat, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking.

3 Reduce heat to low, cover tightly with a lid, and simmer for 18-20 minutes until all water is absorbed and rice is tender.

4 Remove from heat and let stand covered for 10 minutes to steam. Remove lid and let rice cool for 15 minutes until warm but not hot.

5 Prepare Salt Water

Mix 1 cup water with 1 pinch salt in a small bowl, stirring until dissolved. This prevents rice from sticking to your hands.

6 Shape the Onigiri

Wet your hands thoroughly with the salt water. Scoop about 1/4 of the warm rice (roughly 3/4 cup) into your palm and gently press into a loose ball.

7 Create a small well in the center of the rice ball with your thumb. Fill with about 3/4 tablespoon of the filling, then cover with additional rice and seal completely.

8 Cup the rice ball between both palms and gently press while rotating to form a triangular shape, applying even pressure to compact the rice without crushing it.

9 Repeat steps 6-8 to make 4 onigiri total, rewetting hands with salt water between each one to prevent sticking.

10 Finish and Serve

Wrap a strip of nori seaweed around the bottom third of each onigiri as a handle. Sprinkle the tops with 3 tablespoons sesame seeds and serve immediately.

Tips

Use short-grain Japanese rice like Calrose or sushi rice for the best texture and stickiness. Long-grain rice won't hold together properly for shaping.

Always wet your hands with salted water before handling rice to prevent sticking and add subtle seasoning to the exterior of your onigiri.

Make a proper indentation in the rice before adding filling – this creates a pocket that prevents the filling from leaking out during shaping.

Don't overfill your onigiri. Use about 1 tablespoon of filling for each rice ball to maintain structural integrity.

Let cooked rice cool slightly before shaping, but work while it's still warm. Cold rice is difficult to shape and won't stick together properly.

Store nori separately from assembled onigiri until ready to eat to maintain its crispy texture. Wrap nori around the rice ball just before serving.

For meal prep, wrap finished onigiri tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate. Consume within 24 hours for best quality and food safety.

Experiment with different shapes using onigiri molds if hand-shaping proves difficult. Triangle molds create perfectly uniform rice balls every time.