



JAPANESE · STARTER · BETWEEN COURSES · REFINED SMALL PLATE

# Chawanmushi (Thermomix TM6)

Savory Japanese egg custard — two eggs, 300 ml ichiban dashi, and a whisper of soy and mirin. Steamed in small cups at exactly 85 °C for twelve minutes. Silky, trembling, barely-set. The TM6's Varoma tray does what a bamboo steamer does, with absolute temperature control.

Protein Egg + optional shrimp/chicken/ginkgo

Serves 4 × 150 ml cups

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 15 min

Total 30 min (12 min steam + rest)

## THE STORY

### The Most Difficult Easy Dish in Japanese Cuisine

Chawanmushi is a cup of seasoned dashi lightly set with egg. The ingredient list is four lines long and the recipe fits on a Post-it note: 300 ml first-pressing ichiban dashi, 2 eggs, 1 tsp soy, 1 tsp mirin, strained, poured into cups, steamed at 85 °C for 12 minutes. Garnished with a shrimp or a ginkgo nut or a single mitsuba leaf. Trembling, translucent, pale gold. One taste tells you why Japanese cuisine reveres this dish: the seasoned dashi comes through as the primary flavor, the egg functions as a barely-there setting agent, and the mouthfeel is closer to flan than to scrambled egg. It is pure umami in a custard form.

It is also the most temperamental dish in the classical Japanese home repertoire. The texture window is narrow: at 82 °C the custard is under-set and loose; at 90 °C it curdles into broken egg in liquid; at 85 °C it is perfect. The stovetop kettle-steamer every Japanese grandmother uses produces good results in skilled hands because the kettle's lid-pressure regulates steam temperature to roughly this range. Home cooks without the infrastructure get either under-set or curdled versions. The TM6's Varoma setting — precise temperature control + steam distribution from below — produces perfect chawanmushi every time because it holds the exact bath temperature the dish needs.

This recipe also closes a loop in the UMAMI corpus: UMAMI-5 #4 Dashi TM6 produces ichiban + niban; chawanmushi is the canonical application for ichiban where the dashi's clarity matters most. Niban would muddy the custard; ichiban keeps it pale gold. One jar of fresh ichiban yields 3 to 4 chawanmushi batches. This is the dish the dashi was made for.

AT A GLANCE

## Specs

<b>DASHI</b> <b>300 ml ichiban</b> <b>(first-pressing)</b>	<b>EGG RATIO</b> <b>2 eggs to 300</b> <b>ml dashi (1:3</b> <b>by volume)</b>	<b>STEAM TEMP</b> <b>85 °C via TM6</b> <b>Varoma</b> <b>(precise)</b>	<b>STEAM TIME</b> <b>12 min · do not</b> <b>over-steam</b>
<b>DIFFICULTY</b> <b>Intermediate</b> ●●○○○	<b>ACTIVE TIME</b> <b>15 min</b>	<b>TOTAL TIME</b> <b>30 min</b>	<b>SERVES</b> <b>4 × 150 ml cups</b>
<b>CUISINE</b> <b>Japanese</b> <b>refined</b>	<b>KEY RULE</b> <b>Strain the</b> <b>mixture TWICE</b> <b>before cups</b>		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

## What Changed & Why

Chawanmushi is traditionally steamed in a bamboo or metal steamer over a pot, at a roiling simmer with the lid slightly cracked to regulate temperature. Skilled cooks nail it; inexperienced cooks produce either loose custard or curdled egg. The TM6 Varoma adaptation removes the variable by locking the bath temperature at 85 °C exactly. The technique is otherwise unchanged — same ingredients, same ratios, same garnish options. The ● tier uses the cold-soak overnight ichiban from UMAMI-5 #4 for a deeper umami base, adds traditional garnish ingredients (shrimp, ginkgo, mitsuba), and includes a late-addition uni finish for a dinner-party tier.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
<b>TECH</b>	Stovetop steamer with lid-pressure regulation (skilled-hands technique)	TM6 Varoma at 85 °C precise — locked temperature + steam from below	The classical kettle-steamer works when the cook can hold exactly 85 °C by eye. The TM6 holds it by instrument. Success rate goes from 60% to 100%.
<b>ADD</b>	Strain once through fine sieve	Strain TWICE — once through fine sieve, once through cheesecloth	Double-straining removes chalazae (egg membrane threads), foam, and micro-bubbles. Each strain improves final texture clarity; the double-strain is what produces precision chawanmushi.
<b>ELEV</b>	Plain chawanmushi, no garnish	Traditional garnish: shrimp (raw), ginkgo nut (soaked), mitsuba leaf, kamaboko slice	The garnish sits at the bottom of each cup before the custard is poured; as the custard sets, the garnish is suspended and visible through the pale gold. Aesthetically the dish becomes a still-life; functionally the garnish adds textural and flavor dimensions.
<b>SUB</b>	Instant dashi granules (Hondashi) + standard soy sauce	● fresh ichiban from UMAMI-5 #4 + shoyu soy sauce · ● cold-soak-overnight ichiban + Yamaroku or Kishu artisan shoyu + Hon mirin + optional 1 tsp uni at serve	Chawanmushi is a showcase for dashi quality — the dashi is 95% of the flavor. Instant dashi produces an acceptable but measurably inferior version. The uni finish is a modern-kaiseki dinner-party move.

## What You Need

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### Everyday

#### The Custard Base

- 2 large eggs (US large, ~50 g each without shell)
- 300 ml fresh ichiban dashi (from UMAMI-5 #4 Dashi TM6 — made within the last 48 hours for best quality)
- 1 tsp shoyu (Japanese soy sauce, NOT Chinese light soy)
- 1 tsp Hon mirin
- 1/4 tsp fine sea salt (taste dashi first — may already be seasoned enough)

#### Optional Garnish (One to Three of These)

- 4 raw shrimp, peeled and deveined (one per cup)
- 4 ginkgo nuts, soaked in warm water 15 min to soften (one per cup)
- 4 small mitsuba leaves (or shiso, or small parsley sprig)
- 4 thin slices kamaboko (Japanese fish cake) — optional, traditional
- 1 tbsp enoki mushrooms, cut into 3 cm lengths (optional)

#### Substitution Notes

- *No ichiban dashi made yet?* Make the dashi first (UMAMI-5 #4). Shortcut: 300 ml hot water + 1 tsp Hondashi granules. Works but the chawanmushi will read as flatter than proper ichiban version.
- *No Hon mirin?* Substitute 1 tsp sake + 1/4 tsp sugar. NOT 'mirin-style seasoning' (not real mirin).
- *No mitsuba?* Flat-leaf parsley or baby cilantro are functional (not authentic) substitutes. Ginkgo not available? Skip it — most Western home cooks do.

## ● No Limits

### The Custard Base — Premium Dashi

- 2 large eggs from a high-quality producer (pastured, deep-orange yolks show well against pale-gold custard)
- 300 ml **cold-soak overnight ichiban dashi** (per UMAMI-5 #4 ● technique — overnight 4–12 h cold soak + 60 °C hold delivers 2× glutamate yield vs hot-only extraction)
- 1 tsp **Yamaroku or Kishu artisan shoyu** (Umami Mart)
- 1 tsp **Sumiya Bunjiro Hon mirin** (premium, not seasoning)
- Pinch of Nuchi Masu sea salt

### Traditional Garnish — Dinner Party Register

- 4 small shrimp from Honolulu Fish Co or Regiis Ova (raw; cook in the custard as it steams)
- 4 **fresh ginkgo nuts** (Umami Mart or Japanese grocery) — soaked in warm water 15 min to soften and peel
- 4 small **mitsuba** leaves (Japanese parsley — The Japanese Pantry or specialty Asian grocer)
- 4 slices **kamaboko** (traditional Japanese fish cake)
- 1 tbsp fresh enoki or maitake mushroom

### Uni Finish (Dinner Party ●)

- **1 tbsp fresh sea urchin (uni)** per cup — added AFTER steaming, as a raw topping on the finished custard. Source: Regalis Foods, Marky's Caviar Miami. Creates a two-temperature, two-texture dish that reads as modern kaiseki.

## EQUIPMENT

### Your Kit

- Thermomix TM6 (Pablo ✓)
- Varoma tray (TM6 accessory) + tray lid
- 4 × 150 ml ceramic chawanmushi cups (or small ramekins — chawanmushi cups have straight sides and small handles traditionally, but ramekins work)
- Fine-mesh sieve
- Cheesecloth or clean unscented tea towel (for second strain)

- Measuring pitcher (500 ml)

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- Whisk

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- Aluminum foil (optional — to cover cups during steam for condensation control)

#### MISE EN PLACE

## Before You Start

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- Dashi at room temperature (if freshly made, let cool to 40 °C before mixing with eggs — hot dashi will pre-cook the egg).

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- Eggs cracked into a medium bowl. DO NOT whisk vigorously — light stirring only (vigorous whisking introduces air bubbles that produce surface craters in the finished custard).

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- Soy, mirin, salt measured and ready.

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- Cups arranged on a tray. Garnish placed in the bottom of each cup if using (shrimp / ginkgo / enoki — the mitsuba leaf goes on top at the end).

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- TM6 bowl filled with water to the 1 L line — enough for steaming, not so much that water splashes into Varoma tray.

#### MAKE-AHEAD

## Timeline

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- T=0 — Mix base gently**  
Eggs + dashi (at 40 °C) + soy + mirin + salt. Stir gently with chopsticks or whisk for 15 sec — JUST to combine, not to aerate.
  
- T+2 — Double strain**  
First strain: through fine-mesh sieve into a pitcher. Second strain: through cheesecloth-lined sieve into a second pitcher. Removes chalazae, foam, micro-bubbles.
  
- T+5 — Fill cups**  
If using bottom garnish (shrimp, ginkgo): pre-place in each cup. Pour strained custard mixture into cups to within 1 cm of the rim. ~130 ml per cup.

● **T+7 – Set up TM6 steam**

Water to 1 L in TM6 bowl. Varoma tray on top. Set TM6: 85 °C / Sp 1 / 12 min. Begin heating.

● **T+10 – Water at steam**

Water reaches 85 °C and begins to produce steam. Open Varoma tray, arrange cups in a single layer (don't stack). Cover cups loosely with foil if condensation is a concern.

● **T+10:00–22:00 – Steam 12 min**

Close Varoma tray. TM6 holds 85 °C steady. Do NOT open during steaming (lose 3–4 °C every open).

● **T+22 – Test doneness**

Open Varoma. Gently shake one cup — the custard should wobble uniformly (like panna cotta) but not be liquid in the center. A knife inserted into the center and withdrawn should emerge clean.

● **T+23 – Add mitsuba + finish**

Garnish each cup with 1 mitsuba leaf on top. (●) Drop 1 tbs uni on top of finished custard.

● **T+25 – Serve**

Serve HOT in the cups. Eat with a small spoon. Pair with chilled junmai sake.

## METHOD

# The Cook

### 1 Prepare the Base — Gentleness Above All

1. If dashi is hot: cool to 40 °C (warm but not hot). Hot dashi combined with egg will pre-cook into tiny curdled bits, ruining the custard.
2. Crack 2 eggs into a medium bowl.
3. **Stir gently with chopsticks or a whisk for 15 seconds** — goal is to combine whites and yolks, NOT to aerate. Aggressive whisking introduces air bubbles that produce surface craters and texture imperfections.
4. Pour the 40 °C dashi into the egg. Stir gently to combine — 10 more seconds.
5. Add 1 tsp soy + 1 tsp mirin + pinch of salt. Stir once to distribute.
6. **Taste the mixture** before straining. It should read as mild, savory, umami-forward with a whisper of sweetness. If salty: the dashi was already seasoned; no additional salt needed. If flat: a pinch more soy (not salt).

#### WHY THIS WORKS

Chawanmushi is technically a custard — egg proteins denature and form a loose network that traps dashi. The ratio is critical: 1 part egg to 3 parts dashi (by volume) is the classical ratio. Less dashi and the custard reads as firm scrambled egg. More dashi and it fails to set. The egg must not be over-whisked: the goal is uniform protein distribution, not a foam. Air bubbles introduced by whisking migrate to the surface during steaming and produce visible craters. Reference: Food Science Core §Egg Protein Denaturation; Sauces and Condiments §Custard Ratios.

## 2 Double Strain — The Restaurant Move

1. Set a fine-mesh sieve over a measuring pitcher or bowl.
2. First strain: pour the egg-dashi mixture through the sieve. The sieve catches chalazae (the thin ropes of egg white that anchor the yolk), any shell fragments, and large foam bubbles.
3. Second strain: rinse the sieve. Line it with cheesecloth (or a clean, unscented tea towel). Pour the first-strained mixture through the cheesecloth-lined sieve into a fresh pitcher.
4. The second strain catches micro-foam, residual chalazae, and fine particles that the first strain missed. The result is a mirror-smooth mixture.
5. Let the strained mixture rest 2 minutes on the counter. Any remaining surface foam will rise to the top and can be skimmed off with a spoon.

### WHY THIS WORKS

The smoothness of the final chawanmushi depends on the absence of particles (chalazae, shell, foam) and micro-bubbles. A single strain removes the visible defects. A double strain removes the sub-visible defects that would otherwise produce small textural imperfections in the set custard. Restaurant chawanmushi is always double-strained; home cooks frequently skip the second strain and wonder why their custard has surface bubbles and small fibers suspended in the gel. Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Straining Technique; Food Science Core §Emulsion Clarity.

## 3 Cups, Garnish, Fill

1. Arrange 4 × 150 ml cups on a tray. Chawanmushi cups (traditional) have straight sides and small handles for hot-cup handling; standard ramekins work.
2. If using garnish that goes at the bottom: drop one raw shrimp, one softened ginkgo nut, and/or one small enoki-mushroom cluster into each cup.
3. Pour the double-strained custard mixture into each cup to within 1 cm of the rim (~130 ml per cup).
4. Gently tap each cup on the counter 2 to 3 times to release any remaining micro-bubbles.
5. Skim any surface foam with a paper towel touched lightly to the surface (capillary action pulls foam off without disturbing the custard).

## 4

## Set Up TM6 Steam

1. Fill the TM6 bowl with water to the 1 L line. Too much water risks splashing into the Varoma tray; too little may run dry during the 12-minute steam.
2. Attach the Varoma tray on top of the TM6 bowl. Do NOT attach the Varoma lid yet — you need to place the cups first.
3. Set the TM6: **85 °C / Sp 1 / 15 min**. (The extra 3 minutes beyond steam time accounts for the water reaching steam temperature.)
4. Let the water heat up for 3 to 4 minutes — steam should be rising vigorously from the bowl into the Varoma tray.
5. Open the Varoma tray, quickly arrange the filled cups in a single layer (do NOT stack cups; steam needs to circulate around each), close the Varoma lid.
6. **Optional:** before closing the Varoma lid, cover each cup with a small square of foil. Foil prevents condensation from dripping down into the custard from the Varoma lid. This produces a cleaner surface. Skilled cooks skip this; perfectionists use it.

## 5 The 12-Minute Steam

1. Once cups are in the Varoma and lid is on: reset the TM6 timer if needed to **12 minutes** at 85 °C / Sp 1.
2. **Do NOT open the Varoma during steaming.** Every open costs 3 to 4 °C of Varoma internal temperature; recovery takes 90 seconds. A single check at 9 minutes is acceptable if temperature control is verified; two checks will produce under-steamed custard.
3. At 12 minutes: open the Varoma tray. The custard should have a matte surface (not shiny-wet), should wobble as one piece when the cup is gently shaken (not liquid in the center), and should have no visible liquid pooling on top.
4. **Doneness test:** insert a small paring knife or toothpick into the center of one cup. When withdrawn, it should be clean or have only a slight film — no liquid egg. If liquid egg is visible: 2 to 3 more minutes of steam.
5. Over-steaming indicators: surface has pulled away from cup edges and looks cracked; custard has rubber-like feel when tapped. Not recoverable — next batch, pull at 11 minutes.

### WHY THIS WORKS

At 85 Celsius bath temperature, the chawanmushi custard internal temperature reaches roughly 78 to 80 Celsius at the 12-minute mark — exactly the egg-protein coagulation window for a silky-set custard. Below 76 Celsius the egg proteins don't fully denature and the custard is under-set. Above 82 Celsius the proteins over-coagulate and the custard expels water (syneresis), producing a rubbery, grainy texture with visible weeping. The 85 Celsius Varoma setting is calibrated to the 78 to 80 Celsius internal target with a safety margin. Reference: Food Science Core §Egg Coagulation; Thermomix TM6 Mastery §Varoma Temperature.

## 6 Finish + Serve

1. Once doneness is confirmed: carefully lift each cup from the Varoma using tongs or silicone grips (cups are hot).
2. Place each cup on a small serving plate (small ceramic plate or lacquered wooden square).
3. **Finish each cup:** lay one mitsuba leaf on top of the custard. The leaf floats visibly.
4. (● **uni option**): drop 1 tbsp fresh uni on top of the custard. The cold uni against the hot custard creates a two-temperature contrast that is pure modern kaiseki.
5. Serve IMMEDIATELY. Chawanmushi loses its peak quality within 5 minutes of steaming — the custard continues to firm up from residual heat and can over-set.
6. **Eating technique:** use a small spoon. Dig straight down to the bottom of the cup and scoop — each bite should contain custard + garnish from the bottom. No stirring.

## QUICK REFERENCE

# Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Cool dashi to 40 °C if hot	T=0 · 2 min	Warm to the touch, not hot
Gentle stir eggs + dashi + seasoning	T+2 · 30 sec	Combine only, no aeration
Double strain	T+3 · 2 min	Sieve, then cheesecloth-lined sieve
Fill cups + tap + skim foam	T+5 · 3 min	1 cm below rim; tap to release bubbles
Heat TM6 water to steam	T+8 · 3 min <i>passive</i>	85 °C, vigorous steam
Cups into Varoma + lid on	T+10 · 30 sec	Single layer; foil cover optional
Steam 12 min	T+10 to T+22 · 12 min <i>passive</i>	85 °C steady; do not open
Doneness test	T+22 · 30 sec	Clean toothpick; wobbles as one piece
Garnish + serve HOT	T+23 · 2 min	Mitsuba leaf; optional uni

## TROUBLESHOOTING

# Emergency Protocols

### CUSTARD IS LOOSE / LIQUID IN THE CENTER AFTER 12 MIN

Under-steamed. Return cups to Varoma, continue steaming 2 to 3 min. Re-test. If still loose: Varoma temperature may be running low (verify with probe). Some TM6 units run 2 to 3 °C cold on Varoma — calibrate by running at 87 °C next time.

 **CUSTARD HAS CURDLED / BROKEN / GRAINY TEXTURE**

Over-steamed OR steamed too hot. Not recoverable — discard and remake. Next batch: pull at 11 min; verify Varoma holds exactly 85 °C (some TM6 units run 2 to 3 °C hot — calibrate by running at 83 °C).

 **SURFACE HAS MANY SMALL CRATERS / BUBBLES**

Egg mixture was over-whisked or under-strained. For this batch: the craters are cosmetic, not flavor — serve as-is. Next batch: gentle stir only (15 seconds max), always double-strain, tap cups on counter before steaming.

 **CUSTARD STUCK TO CUP**

Cup may have been inadequately cleaned of residue from prior use. Ease a small spatula around the edge to release. The custard will still eat well even if the surface is marred. Next batch: lightly oil each cup with a neutral-oil-damp paper towel before filling.

 **WATER IN THE TM6 BOWL EVAPORATED DURING THE 12-MIN STEAM**

Not quite dry but close — TM6 beeps a low-water warning at about 200 ml remaining. If it beeps during steam: add 500 ml hot water carefully through the measuring cup hole. Next batch: start with 1.2 L water for safety.

 **CONDENSATION DRIPPED FROM VAROMA LID, MARRING CUSTARD SURFACE**

Cosmetic; flavor unaffected. Next batch: cover each cup with a small foil square before closing the Varoma lid — blocks condensation drips completely.

## Technique Notes

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### ● The 85 °C Egg-Custard Window

CUSTARD SCIENCE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO CRÈME BRÛLÉE, FLAN, CHAWANMUSHI, POT DE CRÈME

Egg-based custards require precise temperature control: the proteins must denature enough to set the mixture but not so much that they over-coagulate and expel water (syneresis). For egg-yolk-only custards (crème brûlée, pot de crème) the sweet spot is 78 to 82 Celsius internal; for whole-egg custards (chawanmushi, flan) the sweet spot is 78 to 80 Celsius. Bath or oven temperature should be 5 to 8 Celsius above internal target — 85 Celsius Varoma for a 78 to 80 Celsius internal chawanmushi. Above 90 Celsius bath, the custard will reliably curdle no matter how careful the technique. Below 80 Celsius bath, the custard may not set at all. The TM6 Varoma is the perfect instrument because it holds bath temperature exactly; home oven water-baths drift 5 to 10 Celsius, producing unreliable results. Reference: Food Science Core §Egg Coagulation; Temperatures §Custard Landmarks.

### ● Double-Strain for Professional-level Custard

TECHNIQUE FUNDAMENTAL · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL DELICATE CUSTARDS AND VELOUTÉS

Double-straining — first through fine-mesh sieve, then through cheesecloth-lined sieve — removes particles and micro-bubbles that a single strain misses. The visible improvements: no chalazae fibers suspended in the set custard, no surface bubbles during steaming, mirror-smooth texture. Restaurant chawanmushi, crème brûlée, and all delicate custards are double-strained as a matter of course. At home cooks frequently skip the second strain and wonder why their custards look less refined than restaurant versions. The technique costs 90 seconds and one extra bowl — high ROI. Also applies to clarifying consommés (though with different aims), straining infused oils, and finishing delicate sauces. Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Straining Technique; Stovetop and Pan §Sauce Finishing.

## ● Gentle Whisk to Avoid Aeration

TECHNIQUE FUNDAMENTAL · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO CUSTARDS AND FLANS

Egg-based custards require uniform protein distribution without introduced air. Aggressive whisking produces foam that rises to the surface during cooking and leaves visible craters; vigorous aeration also introduces oxygen that speeds protein oxidation during steaming, producing a slightly off-flavor in delicate preparations. Correct technique: stir with chopsticks or a whisk using a figure-eight motion for 10 to 15 seconds maximum — long enough to combine whites and yolks uniformly, not long enough to develop meringue-like foam. The same principle applies to flan, crème brûlée, pot de crème, and Japanese savory custards. In contrast: whipped cream, meringue, and pâte à bombe REQUIRE aggressive whisking — the technique inverts. Know which register the dish calls for. Reference: Food Science Core §Protein Aeration; Sauces and Condiments §Custard Method.

## ● No Limits: Cold-Soak-Overnight Ichiban (Extends Dashi Phase)

DASHI QUALITY · REFINES FLAVOR SPINE

Per UMAMI-5 #4 Dashi TM6 ● technique card: an overnight cold soak (4 to 12 hours in the fridge) before the 60 Celsius hold doubles the glutamate yield from the konbu. For chawanmushi, where the dashi is 95 percent of the flavor, this upgrade has a disproportionate impact. The finished custard reads as deeper, more savory, more profoundly umami than a hot-extraction-only ichiban. The additional planning cost is zero — start the cold soak before bed the night before, proceed with the chawanmushi prep the next morning. The cold soak is applicable to any dashi used for chawanmushi, suimono (clear soup), or any other preparation where dashi clarity and depth are paramount. Reference: UMAMI-5 #4 Dashi §Overnight Cold Soak; Sauces and Condiments §Dashi.

## ● No Limits: Uni Finish (Adds Post-Steam)

MODERN KAISEKI · ADDS FINISHING COMPONENT

A spoonful of fresh sea urchin (uni) dropped onto the finished chawanmushi just before serving creates a modern Japanese plating that reads as high kaiseki. The uni is cold; the custard is hot (just out of the steam). The uni is briny, creamy, briefly ocean-forward; the custard is seasoned dashi and egg. The contrast on the palate is temperature + texture + flavor simultaneously, and the visual — a bright orange-gold uni mound on pale-gold custard — is plate-photography worthy. Source: Regalis Foods (regalisfoods.com) for Maine uni, Marky's Caviar (Miami) for West Coast uni. Portion: 1 tbsp per cup = roughly 1/4 of a standard uni tray for 4 cups. Do not add uni before steaming — heat destroys its structure instantly. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Uni; Sauces and Condiments §Modern Kaiseki Techniques.

## ● No Limits: Traditional Garnish Program (Extends Aesthetic)

AESTHETIC TRADITION · EXTENDS PRESENTATION

The traditional chawanmushi garnish is a small multi-ingredient composition placed at the bottom of each cup before the custard is poured: shrimp (raw, cooks in the custard), ginkgo nut (soaked, peeled), a sliver of kamaboko (pink fish cake), a small mitsuba leaf floated on top after steaming. The custard suspends the garnish in the lower half of the cup, visible through the pale-gold gel. Each spoonful lifts pieces of the garnish along with the custard. The aesthetic effect is of a small jewel-box containing a tiny composition; the flavor effect is textural variation (shrimp snap, ginkgo tender, kamaboko bouncy) against the uniform silky custard. Sourcing for traditional garnish: Japanese groceries for ginkgo and kamaboko, specialty Asian produce for mitsuba. Not strictly necessary — plain chawanmushi is beautiful — but the garnish is what distinguishes an elegant home presentation from a restaurant one. Reference: Pantry and Staples §Japanese Garnishes; Protein Encyclopedia §Kamaboko.

## What to Drink

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### Wine — Japanese

Chilled junmai sake — same bottle as Miso Salmon SV (Dassai, Hakkaisan, Kubota)

*Chawanmushi and junmai sake are the classical pairing. The sake's rice-derived umami mirrors the dashi; its moderate alcohol (15 percent) avoids overwhelming the delicate custard; its clean sweetness complements the mirin. Serve at 10 to 12 Celsius in small ceramic cups. A 60 ml pour per guest, with chawanmushi as the first course of a kaiseki-style dinner. If serving as a course within a larger meal, the same bottle of sake can carry through the fish main.*

### Wine — Western

Off-dry Riesling Kabinett OR premier cru Chablis (non-oaked)

*Western wine alternatives for guests who don't drink sake. Kabinett Riesling's residual sweetness balances the dashi's umami; its high acidity cuts through the custard's richness. Non-oaked Chablis offers flint minerality that echoes the konbu in the dashi. Both served cold (8 to 10 Celsius).*

### Non-Alcoholic

Hot hojicha or sencha at 70–75 °C

*The classical non-alcohol pairing in kaiseki settings. Hojicha (roasted green tea) is milder and complements chawanmushi's delicate flavor without competing. Sencha is sharper — choose based on the following course. Serve in small ceramic cups at the same temperature as the tea (hot, not boiling).*

## Menu Ideas

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### **This as Kaiseki Starter**

Classical deployment. Chawanmushi as the opening course of a Japanese meal, served in small ceramic cups on small plates. 150 ml portion is a tasting amount; guests should finish wanting more. Pair with chilled junmai sake.

### **Downstream — Main Course (Japanese)**

Miso-Infused Salmon SV (UMAMI-3 #4) — same dashi-based register, same sake pairing. The silky-translucent salmon continues the Japanese flavor narrative chawanmushi opens. Reference: UMAMI-3 #4 Miso Salmon SV.

### **Downstream — Main Course (Fusion)**

Whole Leg of Lamb SV → Kamado (UMAMI-6 #4) — the Japanese starter + Mediterranean lamb is a fearless-fusion register shift that works precisely because chawanmushi is so delicate it doesn't commit the rest of the meal to Japanese. Reference: UMAMI-6 #4 Lamb Leg.

### **Downstream — Dashi Economy**

One 1 L ichiban dashi batch (UMAMI-5 #4) yields: 4 chawanmushi (300 ml) + ponzu batch (50 ml) + miso soup base + a cup of chilled dashi for a guest. The dashi is the pantry investment; chawanmushi is the showpiece that justifies it.

### **Casual — Two-Cup Dinner for Two**

Scale to 2 cups: 150 ml dashi + 1 egg + 1/2 tsp soy + 1/2 tsp mirin. Same technique, smaller batch. A 30-minute Sunday-night starter-as-main with a small bowl of rice on the side. Refined without being formal.

YOUR NOTES

# Cook Log

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## Session Notes

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ · Serves: \_\_\_\_\_ · Rating: \_\_ / 5

*Use this space to record what you changed, what worked, and what you'd do differently next time. Your future self will thank you.*



Stop following recipes. Start understanding food.

