



JAPANESE · FOUNDATIONAL SAUCE · SAUCE · CONDIMENT · FOUNDATION

Ponzu Clásico · con Variante Yuzu

The single most versatile Japanese condiment in the library. Shoyu + mirin + citrus juice + dashi, in the ratio the Kansai houses have used for three hundred years. Makes the base dressing for every crudo, tataki, gyoza dip, and cold-noodle sauce in the kitchen. Two variants — a classical rice-vinegar ponzu and a yuzu-forward variant — so the same pantry base covers both neutral applications and citrus-forward ones.

Protein None (naturally vegan — sauce only)

Serves ~300 ml sauce · 20-30 portions · keeps 3 weeks refrigerated

Difficulty Beginner

Active 10 min active

Total 24-48 h rest (optional) · immediately usable

THE STORY

The One Sauce That Unlocks a Japanese Library

A real Japanese kitchen has ponzu in the fridge the way a Spanish kitchen has alioli. It sits in a glass jar, shakes a little when opened, and appears at almost every course — a dip for gyoza, a dressing for cucumber sunomono, a glaze for grilled fish, a finishing acid on chawanmushi, the dressing under every crudo that isn't a ceviche. The recipe itself is almost absurdly simple: shoyu, mirin, citrus, dashi. It is the *ratios* + the *rest* that separate a shelf-stable restaurant ponzu from a sharp thrown-together imitation.

The classical Kansai ratio is 1 : 1 : 1 (shoyu : mirin : citrus) with a splash of rice vinegar and a measured cup of dashi. The whole mixture rests 24-48 hours refrigerated before use — this is the single biggest flavor lever. The rest lets the citrus acid mellow, the shoyu's edge soften, the mirin's alcohol dissipate, and the dashi's umami integrate. The difference between a day-one ponzu and a day-two ponzu is perceptible side-by-side.

Two variants ship with this recipe: the *classical* (rice vinegar + sudachi OR yuzu OR lemon), which is the universal Japanese-kitchen workhorse, and the *yuzu-forward* (100% yuzu juice, no rice vinegar), which pairs with crudo applications where yuzu's floral-citrus complexity is the feature note. Both use the same technique and rest; only the acid components differ.

The connection web: this ponzu is the dressing in [kanpachi-crudo](#) ✓, the drizzle in the new [hamachi-crudo-yuzu-kosho](#), the oyster-dressing option in the proposed oysters-three-dressings (UMAMI-2 #4), the dashi-bridge to [dashi-tm6-ichiban-niban](#) ✓ (which this recipe consumes as an ingredient), the gyoza dip, and the cold-soba tsuyu base. One recipe, six downstream applications. The pantry multiplier equivalent of [tomate-concentrado-tm6](#) for the Japanese side of the library.

Specs

<p>YIELD</p> <p>~300 ml (scales linearly)</p>	<p>BASE RATIO (CLASSICAL)</p> <p>1 : 1 : 1 shoyu : mirin : citrus + rice vinegar + dashi</p>	<p>YUZU VARIANT RATIO</p> <p>1 : 1 : 1 shoyu : mirin : yuzu juice + NO vinegar</p>	<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p>Beginner</p> <p>●○○○○</p>
<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p>10 min</p>	<p>REST TIME</p> <p>24-48 h refrigerated (mandatory for classical; optional for yuzu variant)</p>	<p>KEEPS</p> <p>3 weeks refrigerated sealed</p>	<p>DASHI</p> <p>Ichiban dashi, cold (see dashi-tm6- ichiban-niban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>)</p>
<p>SALT LEVEL</p> <p>Adjust shoyu ratio down 10% if using usukuchi (already saltier)</p>	<p>SERVE TEMP</p> <p>Refrigerator-cold (4-6 °C) for crudo · room temp for gyoza dip</p>		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

What Changed & Why

The two-tier question here is about shoyu, mirin, and citrus quality. Technique is identical — same ratio, same rest. The ● Tier A (Everyday) uses Kikkoman Usukuchi + Takara Kotteri Mirin + Yakami Orchard bottled yuzu juice + Mizkan rice vinegar +

ichiban dashi from [dashi-tm6-ichiban-niban](#) ✓. Produces a restaurant-quality ponzu, indistinguishable to most palates from what's served at sushi counters. The 🟠 Tier B (No-Limits) uses Yamaroku 4-year kioke-aged shoyu + Sumiya Bunjiro Mikawa mirin (1911, Japan's most respected small-batch mirin house) + fresh-squeezed winter yuzu (Dec-Feb only, via specialty importer) + Iio Jozo Fujisu 120-year-aged rice vinegar + ichiban dashi made with Okui Kombu (1871) and Mikawa katsuobushi. The Tier B difference is real and compounds — each upgraded ingredient carries subtle complexity that adds up to a sauce with sensory depth matched only at top-tier Japanese restaurants.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	'Use any soy sauce, add rice vinegar, lemon juice, and some sugar' — the common US internet recipe	Classical 1:1:1 shoyu:mirin:citrus ratio + rice vinegar + ichiban dashi + 24-48 h refrigerated rest	The ratio is a 300-year-old Kansai standard that balances salt-sweet-acid-umami at optimal tongue-coverage. Substituting sugar for mirin loses the mirin-umami backbone (amino acids + glutamates, not just sweet). Skipping dashi loses the fifth-taste fifth-dimension. Skipping the rest serves a sharp, aggressive sauce instead of an integrated one.
ADD	—	Ichiban dashi as a measured component (1/2 cup per 300 ml total batch)	Many Western ponzu recipes skip dashi entirely and make a 'citrus-soy dressing' that lacks umami depth. Classical ponzu's fifth dimension comes from dashi — the kombu-katsuobushi glutamate base that makes the sauce resonate with every umami-rich food it meets. Without dashi you have a Japanese-adjacent dressing; with it you have actual ponzu.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
ADD	—	Two documented variants ship together: Classical (with rice vinegar) + Yuzu-Forward (no vinegar, 100% yuzu juice)	A single ponzu recipe tries to be everything and serves nothing perfectly. The classical covers gyoza dip, cold-noodle tsuyu, sunomono dressing, fish glaze. The yuzu-forward covers crudo, tartare, delicate oyster dressing. Different applications want different acid registers. Two jars in the fridge, one technique.
ELEV	Use ponzu immediately after mixing	Mandatory 24-48 hour refrigerated rest before first use	Day-one ponzu: sharp, bright, one-dimensional — the acid hits first, then dissolves. Day-two ponzu: integrated, savory-sweet-acid-umami in balance, any single bite carries all four notes. The rest is the single most-skipped step in US home ponzu and the single most visible difference between home-made and restaurant-grade. Refrigerate immediately after mixing; use from day 2 onward.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
SKIP	Adding sugar to balance the citrus	No sugar. Mirin carries the sweet. Yuzu's natural sweetness rounds the acid.	Sugar makes ponzu cloying and one-dimensional. Mirin's glucose + maltose + rice-amino-acid complex is the correct sweetening vehicle — it integrates, it doesn't dominate. US supermarket 'ponzu' often adds sugar for cost reasons; authentic ponzu never does. If your mixture tastes too sharp at day 0, add 1 tsp more mirin (not sugar) and rest longer.

What You Need

● Everyday

The Classical Ponzu (makes ~300 ml)

- 75 g (~5 tbsp) **Kikkoman Usukuchi Shoyu** (Whole Foods Brickell Japanese section) — light Japanese soy. NOT Kikkoman regular dark shoyu; usukuchi is saltier and cleaner-flavored, correct for ponzu.
- 75 g (~5 tbsp) **Takara Kotteri Mirin** (Whole Foods) — real mirin (hon-mirin), not 'mirin-style seasoning.' The label must say 'hon mirin' or list rice + rice-koji as ingredients.
- 60 g (~4 tbsp) **Yakami Orchard Yuzu Juice, bottled** (via Market Hall Foods) — or 45 g yuzu + 15 g sudachi or calamansi.
- 15 g (~1 tbsp) **Mizkan Genuine Brewed Rice Vinegar**.
- 75 g (1/3 cup) **ichiban dashi** — cold, from [dashi-tm6-ichiban-niban](#) ✓ recipe. Or quick-dashi: 1 tsp dashi powder + 75 g water (less ideal but works).

The Yuzu Variant (makes ~300 ml)

- 75 g **Kikkoman Usukuchi Shoyu**.
- 75 g **Takara Kotteri Mirin**.
- 75 g **Yakami Orchard Yuzu Juice, bottled** (or 75 g fresh yuzu juice Dec-Feb).
- 75 g **ichiban dashi** (same as classical).
- *No rice vinegar*. Yuzu brings all the acid; no need to dilute.

No Limits

The Classical Ponzu • Tier B

- 75 g **Yamaroku 4-Year Kioke-Aged Shoyu** — barrel-aged artisan shoyu via The Japanese Pantry (see [sourcing/05-japanese-pantry](#)). Deeper, more umami-dense than Kikkoman Usukuchi.
- 75 g **Sumiya Bunjiro Mikawa Hon-Mirin** — 1911 small-batch mirin house from Mikawa, Japan's most respected; via The Japanese Pantry. The natural sweetness is complex, aged-rice-amino-rich.
- 60 g **fresh Winter Yuzu juice** — hand-squeezed from fresh yuzu (Dec-Feb only; via specialty importer or Japanese-market pre-order); or 45 g fresh yuzu + 15 g sudachi.
- 15 g **Ito Jozo Fujisu 120-year-aged rice vinegar** (Market Hall Foods).
- 75 g **Tier-B Ichiban Dashi** — from dashi-tm6-ichiban-niban using Okui Kombu (1871) + Mikawa honkarebushi katsuobushi (via The Japanese Pantry).

The Yuzu Variant • Tier B

- 75 g **Yamaroku 4-Year Kioke-Aged Shoyu**.
- 75 g **Sumiya Bunjiro Mikawa Hon-Mirin**.
- 75 g **fresh Winter Yuzu juice**, hand-squeezed.
- 75 g **Tier-B Ichiban Dashi**.

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- Digital scale (1 g resolution) — mandatory for the ratio

- Glass measuring pitcher (500 ml) — for mixing + storage transfer

- Small whisk or fork — for gently mixing without foaming

- 2 glass jars with tight lids (300 ml each) — one per variant, for 3-week refrigerated storage

- Labels — date-stamp each jar; day-1 ponzu vs day-3 ponzu taste markedly different

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- Ichiban dashi cold (from dashi-tm6-ichiban-niban). If making fresh, complete that recipe first and refrigerate before starting this.

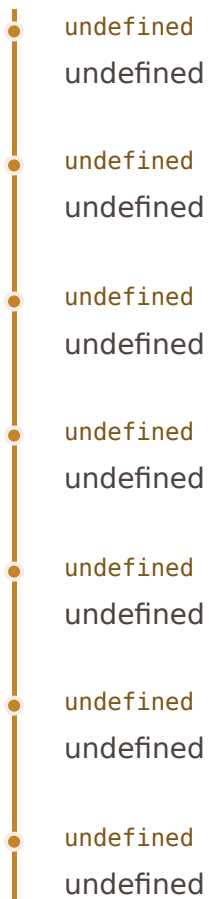
- Shoyu, mirin, citrus juice, rice vinegar all at room temperature.

- 2 clean glass jars sterilized with hot water + air-dried.

- Scale zeroed. Measuring pitcher ready.

MAKE - AHEAD

Timeline



METHOD

The Cook

1 Phase 1 · Measure + Mix (Classical)

1. In a clean 500 ml glass pitcher: weigh 75 g shoyu, 75 g mirin, 60 g yuzu juice, 15 g rice vinegar, 75 g cold ichiban dashi.
2. Gently stir with a small whisk or fork — aim for integration, not foaming. 10 seconds of gentle stirring is enough.
3. Transfer to a labeled glass jar (label: 'Ponzu Clásico · [YYYY-MM-DD]').
4. Seal tight. Refrigerate immediately.

WHY THIS WORKS

The 1:1:1 shoyu:mirin:citrus ratio is the Kansai-tradition balance. Shoyu = salt + umami (glutamate, inosinate from fermented wheat/soy). Mirin = complex sweet (glucose, maltose, rice amino acids). Citrus = bright acid (citric, ascorbic, plus yuzu's floral aromatics). Rice vinegar = clean mellow acid (acetic, lactic, plus rice-fermentation aromatics). Dashi = fifth-taste (glutamate from kombu, inosinate from katsuobushi). All five classical taste registers are present — this is why ponzu lands on almost anything.

2 Phase 2 · Measure + Mix (Yuzu Variant)

1. In a second clean 500 ml glass pitcher: weigh 75 g shoyu, 75 g mirin, 75 g yuzu juice, 75 g cold ichiban dashi.
2. Gently stir with a whisk or fork for 10 seconds.
3. Transfer to a labeled glass jar (label: 'Ponzu Yuzu Variant · [YYYY-MM-DD]').
4. Seal tight. Refrigerate immediately.

WHY THIS WORKS

The yuzu variant drops the rice vinegar entirely — fresh yuzu's complex acid (citric + ascorbic + unique yuzu-aromatic terpenes) carries the full acid register without needing the vinegar's clean backbone. More delicate than classical but more citrus-forward.

3 Phase 3 · Rest (Mandatory)

1. Refrigerate both jars 24-48 hours minimum before first use.
2. At 24 hours: classical usable but still has a slightly sharp top-note; yuzu variant well-integrated.
3. At 48 hours: both fully integrated. All flavor components have found their balance.
4. The integration curve continues gently through day 7; by day 10 the sauce has reached its peak-flavor plateau and will hold there for ~2 more weeks before slowly declining.
5. Use from day 2 onward. Discard at day 21 (or earlier if any off-smell develops).

WHY THIS WORKS

The 24-48h rest is driven by three molecular processes: (1) acid mellowing — bright-edge terpenes volatilize slightly, rounder acid compounds stay in solution, (2) amino-acid interaction — shoyu's glutamates bind loosely with mirin's amino acids to form more complex umami notes, (3) aromatic integration — the citrus top-note settles into the saltiness rather than sitting on top. All three happen gradually; 24h is the minimum for the integration to register as perceptibly different from fresh-mixed.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Mise shoyu, mirin, citrus, dashi, vinegar	T- 1 0 m	Room temp except dashi (cold from fridge)
Mix Classical variant	T- 5 m	75 + 75 + 60 + 15 + 75 g; gentle 10-sec stir
Transfer + label jar	T- 3 m	'Ponzu Clásico · YYYY-MM-DD'
Mix Yuzu variant	T- 2 m	75 + 75 + 75 + 75 g; gentle 10-sec stir; no rice vinegar
Transfer + label jar	T- 1 m	'Ponzu Yuzu Variant · YYYY-MM-DD'
Refrigerate both	T+ 0 m	Tight seal, back of fridge (cool spot)

STEP	TIME	CUE
First use (classical)	T+ 2 4 h - 4 8 h	Integration begins ~24h, complete ~48h
First use (yuzu variant)	T+ 2 4 h	Faster integration due to no vinegar
Peak flavor plateau	T+ 4 8 h to T+ 2 1 days	Refrigerated, sealed — use freely
Discard	T+ 2 1 days	Or earlier if off-smell develops

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

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Technique Notes

● **Universal: The 24-48h Rest (Sauce Integration)**

JAPANESE SAUCE FOUNDATION

The rest between mixing and first use is the single most important variable in a refrigerated Japanese sauce. Ponzu, tsuyu, tare, miso-daikon — all improve markedly with 24-48h cold rest. The mechanism is amino-acid interaction: shoyu's glutamates bind loosely with mirin's amino acids, dashi's inosinate integrates, citrus terpenes settle into the salty base. A fresh-mixed sauce is sharp + one-dimensional; a rested sauce is integrated + layered. Label and date every jar; use from day 2 onward. Applies across the Japanese sauce library.

● **Universal: 1:1:1 (Shoyu : Mirin : Citrus)**

JAPANESE SAUCE FOUNDATION · RATIO

The Kansai-tradition classical ratio for ponzu is 1:1:1 by weight — shoyu, mirin, citrus. Memorize and scale. For 300 ml total: 75 + 75 + 60 (or 75) + 15 g rice vinegar + 75 g dashi. The ratio balances salt-sweet-acid-umami-five at optimal tongue coverage. Adjust: 10% less shoyu if using Yamaroku or other aged artisan shoyu (already saltier). 10% more citrus if using lemon instead of yuzu (lemon is less aromatic). Never deviate by more than 20% or the ratio loses its character.

● **Universal: Gentle Stirring (Aromatic Preservation)**

JAPANESE SAUCE · TECHNIQUE

Citrus aromatics are volatile. Aggressive whisking introduces air that oxidizes the top-note compounds (citrus terpenes, yuzu-specific aromatics) within seconds. For any sauce with fresh-citrus juice as a component, gentle stirring (whisk or fork, 10 seconds max) is the rule. Gently = no foam formation, no splashing, just enough to achieve integration. This principle applies to ponzu, vinaigrette, shrub, gastique with fresh citrus — any sauce where the aromatic top-note is a feature.

● Japanese Foundation: Two Ponzu Variants Strategy

PANTRY · PARALLEL BUILDING

Most Japanese home kitchens keep two ponzu jars, not one. The classical (with rice vinegar) covers neutral applications — gyoza dip, cold-noodle tsuyu, sunomono, grilled-fish glaze. The yuzu-forward (no rice vinegar, 100% yuzu) covers citrus-feature applications — crudo drizzle, delicate oyster dressing, white-fish tataki, cold sashimi-counter service. Two variants, same technique, different flavor registers. Restaurant-kitchen standard; home-cook upgrade.

● No Limits: Artisan Shoyu + Mirin Pairings

SUMMIT-TIER SOURCING · FERMENTATION HERITAGE

Yamaroku Shoyu (4-year kioke barrel-aged) + Sumiya Bunjiro Mikawa Hon-Mirin (1911 small-batch from Mikawa) is the summit-tier artisan-shoyu-artisan-mirin pairing. Both are sourced via The Japanese Pantry. The difference vs Kikkoman Usukuchi + Takara Kotteri is real and compounds — each upgraded ingredient contributes subtle aged-umami + rice-complex-sweet notes that the whole ponzu inherits. At this tier, a ponzu made at home is indistinguishable from what's served at Michelin-counter sushi in Tokyo. Investment: ~\$40 for one bottle of each; uses last 12-18 months. Highest Japanese-pantry leverage available.

● No Limits: Fresh Winter Yuzu (Dec-Feb)

SEASONAL SOURCING · YEAR-WINDOW

Fresh yuzu from Japan's winter-peak harvest (December through mid-February) carries aromatic compounds the bottled juice simply cannot. The volatile terpene profile of fresh yuzu is complex, floral-pine-citrus, and the aroma intensifies in the 24-48h rest of the ponzu — producing a sauce with a signature that's detectable to any cook who's made the sauce with both. Availability: Japanese specialty importers in Dec-Feb; pre-order early December via Mutual Trading or a Japanese-market broker in NYC/SF. Outside the window, return to bottled Yakami Orchard (which is itself very good). Fresh is a seasonal luxury, not a year-round expectation. See sourcing/05-japanese-pantry §Yuzu.

What to Drink

🔥 Application · Crudo (Primary Use)

Yuzu variant is the drizzle on kanpachi-crudo ✓ and hamachi-crudo-yuzu-kosho; also bridges to tuna-tartare-sherry-soy ✓ when a Japanese-side alternative is wanted

Ponzu is the canonical crudo dressing. Yuzu variant specifically for the aroma-forward cases where yuzu should lead; classical for the cases where the fish is the hero and ponzu provides a quiet acid register.

🔥 Application · Gyoza Dip

Classical ponzu + a small pinch of shichimi togarashi + a few thin slices of scallion in a small dipping ramekin. Serves 2-3 gyoza per guest

Classic Japanese dumpling dip. Room temp, not cold. The ponzu's umami-acid combination cuts the gyoza's fat-and-pork richness. Scallions add crisp-fresh; shichimi adds warm-chile.

🔥 Application · Sunomono (Cucumber Salad)

Thinly sliced Japanese or Persian cucumber, salted 10 min to draw water, squeezed dry, dressed with 1 tbsp classical ponzu + pinch of sesame seeds

The universal Japanese cucumber salad. Ponzu-dressed sunomono is a 2-minute side that lifts any Japanese plate. Scale: 2-3 cucumbers for 4 people; 30 g ponzu.

🔥 Application · Cold Soba Tsuyu Base

Dilute classical ponzu 1:2 with cold dashi + a splash of mirin, garnish with scallion, wasabi, grated daikon. Serves as the dipping sauce for cold soba noodles

Summer-dinner one-bowl meal. Cold soba + dilute-ponzu tsuyu is a Japanese weeknight staple; the ponzu foundation makes the tsuyu restaurant-grade.

Application · Oyster Service

Yuzu variant at 1 tbs per dozen oysters, plus 2 other dressings (sherry mignonette + horseradish-sake granita), all served on the side. The three-way oyster plate.

Connects to the proposed oysters-three-dressings recipe (UMAMI-2 #4 in the slate). Yuzu ponzu is the Japanese leg of the oyster service; the other two dressings cover Spanish-classical + Japanese-winter. Guests build their own bite.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

The Ponzu Two-Jar Pantry Install

One Saturday morning: make both variants, label them, store. Uses for the next 3 weeks include: crudo drizzles, gyoza dip, sunomono dressing, cold-soba tsuyu base, oyster dressing, chilled-tofu topping. A single 20-minute pantry move unlocks 6+ dishes.

Japanese Crudo Flight (6 guests)

Yuzu variant drizzled on kanpachi-crudo , hamachi-crudo-yuzu-kosho, and a classical tuna-tartare-sherry-soy (using classical variant for the Spanish-Japanese bridge). Three crudo, one condiment foundation, distinct registers per fish.

Tuesday Weeknight Dinner

Gyoza (store-bought is fine) + classical ponzu dipping ramekins + sunomono with classical ponzu dressing + a bowl of shari (Batch 1 recipe) under a 90-sec pan-seared piece of salmon. 25-minute Japanese dinner, entirely from the pantry.

Sunday Summer Lunch (4 guests)

Cold soba with diluted-classical tsuyu as the main. Proposed-slate oyster service as opener (yuzu variant as one of the three dressings). Cold beer or chilled junmai. Finish with watermelon + bottarga from proposed UMAMI-2 #3. Pan-Pacific summer arc.

Spanish-Japanese Fusion Plate

Yuzu variant drizzled on raw Spanish gambas rojas (proposed carpaccio de gambas rojas, UMAMI-2 #2 in slate) + a finishing line of shiso oil from hamachi-crudo-yuzu-kosho. The bridge plate: Spanish shellfish, Japanese condiment register.

YOUR NOTES

Cook Log

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.

