

# Onigiri

Growing up on the Big Island of Hawaii with very little money, rice became a central food for my family. One of my favorite childhood snacks (and still a favorite) has been onigiri (Japanese rice balls) and mochi (Japanese sweet rice dessert).

In class we made our own onigiri with several optional ingredients and then tasted mochi with sweet azuki bean before starting work on our interview questions for this family research project. Most of the students loved making these simple snacks, getting their fingers sticky with rice, and tasting several strong flavors such as shiso leaf and umeboshi plum paste. There are many variations of onigiri with the foundation being sushi rice wrapped in seaweed with small amounts of sour and salty ingredients in the center of the rice ball.

## Onigiri

- Cooked sushi rice (about 1/4 cup per person)
- Nori (roasted seaweed cut into strips to wrap around rice ball)
- Pickled Ginger (small strips, just a pinch for each onigiri)
- Umeboshi (pickled plum paste, a little goes a long way!)
- Furikake (Japanese rice seasoning usually with sesame seeds, salt, sugar, seaweed or bonito fish flakes)

Using the tips of your fingers, press rice into a 3" round ball. Make an indentation in the center of the ball- add a pinch of pickled ginger and umeboshi, cover with a bit more rice. Sprinkle with furikake. Wrap rice ball in nori. Enjoy!

A few notes:

- We made these with our hands, but traditionally they are shaped with an onigiri press to create beautiful triangular rice balls.- The ingredients in onigiri can vary greatly but the important aspect is the ratio: there should just be a tiny bit of sour or salty flavor balanced by the rice.- All ingredients can be found at Fubonn Supermarket and other Asian grocery stores.

Have fun making your own onigiri!