

Courtesy of Nakato

SOUPS & STEWS Nakato

Miso soup from Nakato

By Sarra Sedghi · Rough Draft Atlanta, 8/18/2026

Ingredients

SOUP

- [ ] 5 cups water
- [ ] 1 sheet (about 5×5 inches) dashi kombu (dried kelp)
- [ ] 1 handful dried bonito flakes with the bigger shavings
- [ ] 5 to 6 Tbsp miso paste

TOPPINGS (OPTIONAL)

- [ ] Cubed soft silken tofu
- [ ] Green onions
- [ ] Wakame (dry) seaweed
- [ ] Mussels
- [ ] Potato
- [ ] Taro
- [ ] Daikon
- [ ] Shiitake mushrooms
- [ ] Carrots

Directions

1. **Prep the kelp:** Soak the dried kelp sheet in room-temperature water in a medium saucepan for at least one hour.
2. Bring water to a boil, but right before the boiling point, pull out the kelp and dispose.
3. **Add the bonito:** Add a handful of bonito flakes into water. Lower the temperature and let it steep for 3 to 5 minutes. (Be care not to boil at a high temperature, which will overcook the bonito flakes and cause bitterness.)
4. **Incorporate the broth:** Strain dashi broth into another saucepan over high heat. Lower the temperature to prevent break down.
5. **Add miso paste:** Add miso paste into a small strainer or colander and dissolve into the broth.
6. Add toppings of choice and serve.

- [ ] Crab
- [ ] Littleneck clams

The story

This week, we're sharing a recipe for the miso soup from Nakato, Atlanta's oldest Japanese restaurant.

Miso, or fermented soybean paste, is a quintessential ingredient in Japanese cuisine thought to have arrived in the country 1,300 years ago from China. According to Serious Eats, miso paste was not stirred into dashi broth until some time during Japan's Kamakura Period (1185-1333).

Fermentation allows ingredients to develop umami, or the "fifth taste." Depending on the fermentation time, the umami flavors in the soup can range from light and mild, as found in white miso, to strong and intense, as found in red miso. The latter is aged for several years.

Once a delicacy reserved for nobility, miso eventually made its way into every level of Japanese society. Today in Japan, miso soup is commonly eaten at breakfast or dinner, often served alongside a rice dish.

Nakato owner Sachi Nakato Takahara recommends sourcing key ingredients for the soup from an international or specialty market, like Buford Highway Farmers Market. While the recipe itself is simple, incorporating various toppings such as vegetables, tofu, or seafood like shrimp will bulk up the dish.

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