

A near-miss for miso

I almost never knew the joys of Japanese bean paste

BY ROGER MOOKING

While on my first tour-bus jaunt across the country with the Barenaked Ladies, the road manager for my group Bass is Base was amazed to learn I had never had sushi. So off we went to find the best Japanese restaurant in our current stop of Calgary, which is not exactly a sushi mecca. We managed to find a fantastic spot, and my meal started with a warming bowl of miso soup. Many years later, I am still hooked, and miso is a staple in my pantry.

Miso, also referred to as

bean paste, is used often in Japanese cooking. I like to employ it as an addition to a variety of recipes from marinades to soups. Miso can usually be found in your local grocery store, but if not it is easy to find in any Japanese specialty store or natural food shop, and I've seen it more and more lately in Chinese grocery stores as well. Miso is packaged as a paste in small jars that should be kept in the refrigerator. There are a few varieties to choose from. The taste of miso varies depending on the type of miso you're cooking with. The three most common types of miso are: *shinshu*, "blond" or "white miso"; *sendai*, or "red miso"; and *hatcho*, or "dark brown miso." Each type has varying ingredients, salt content, temperature and duration of fermentation, all of which

contribute to the variety in appearance and flavour.

Blond/white miso is lighter and most commonly used in miso soup, or when cooking with veggies or chicken. Blond or red miso can be used in a stir fry by simply adding a little Chinese cooking wine, chicken stock and veggies. Dark miso has a much stronger flavour and is better suited for marinades when cooking with beef or pork. There is so much flavour in miso that you don't need much else in a recipe. Because it is already salted, you'll find you don't likely need to add any extra salt to your dishes either.

The recipe I've chosen for you today uses a dark miso to make a phenomenal marinade for ribs. Make your exotic everyday.

MISO MARINATED RIBS

(Serves four)

Ingredients

- 1 cup (250 mL) dark miso paste
- ½ cup (75 mL) brown sugar
- 2 tsp (10 mL) cayenne
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) white wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp (5 mL) soy sauce
- 1 tbsp (5 mL) sesame oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 shallot, minced
- zest and juice of three oranges
- 1 sweet onion, cut into rings
- 2 oranges
- 2 baby back pork ribs, membrane removed
- 1 cup (250 mL) water



Miso Rub

1. In a bowl, add-dark miso paste, brown sugar, cayenne and vinegar; mix.

2. Add soy sauce, sesame oil, garlic, shallots and zest and juice of three oranges.

3. Mix well.

Baby Back Ribs

1. Preheat oven to 300F.

2. Line a tray with foil.

3. Place onions and one sliced orange on tray.

4. Place ribs bone side down on top of onions and orange slices.

5. Brush half of miso rub on ribs.

6. Squeeze juice of half an orange over ribs.

7. Add water to tray before placing in oven.

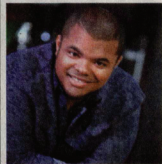
8. Place in oven and cook for two hours, or until tender.

9. Half way through cooking, squeeze juice of remaining half of orange.

10. In the last half hour of cooking, brush remaining miso rub over ribs.

■ Tips and recipe are courtesy of *Everyday Exotic* starring Roger Mooking, airing Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. on Food Network.

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FOOD NETWORK

Roger Mooking learned to love miso in Calgary.