

# River Currents

Winter 1999/2000

As hands of the Roman clock approach the beginning of a new millennium, I sit at the base of an ancient oak with my back up firmly against its massive trunk. This oak stands gigantic in the path of an old stone wall running up through the woods and marking the southern boundary of South River Farm. It is at least three hundred years old. Three people, with arms outstretched, can barely reach around its base. Yet three of these slumbering oaks, standing in a line of time, could easily span the millennium now closing. When the great grandfather of this tree was dropping acorns, the present millennium was just beginning. South River was alive with the beaver, the bear, and the salmon. At that time, my father's clan lived in southern England, near a deep well for which they were named. Even then, in another far-off land — Japan — miso was already revered. It was being made in much the same way as we continue to make it now, back here in the future at South River.

As the modern pace quickens, and we become increasingly occupied with virtual worlds and machines of our own making, it is comforting, at the same time, sobering to feel direct connection, back to back, spine to spine, with this mighty, yet vulnerable being of silence, dropping acorns by my side. As they fall, I hear these words of the Persian poet, Hafiz:

*Just sit there right now,  
Don't do a thing.  
Just rest.*

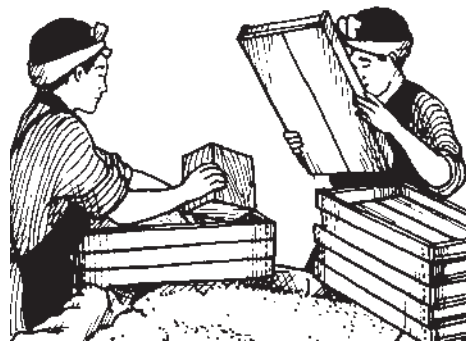
*For the separation from God  
Is the hardest work in the world.*

*Let me bring you trays of food  
And something that you like to drink.*

*You can use my soft words  
As a cushion for your head.*

*Christian Elwell*

*Miso making as it was,  
and still is, at South River*



WILL ELWELL



WILL ELWELL

Line drawings by Akiko Aoyagi in *The Book of Miso*



## MISO LORE

Many scholars theorize that miso developed from earlier fermented foods introduced into Japan from China along with the arrival of Buddhism in the 6th Century AD. Others trace the origins of miso to the northeastern provinces of Japan itself, where archeological evidence indicates the early mastery of fermentation processes.

The written word *miso* first appears around 800 AD. Among the royalty it was sometimes called "...bigurashi, meaning 'a

clear-toned summer cicada' whose song is said to be able to penetrate even the hardest stone. Likewise, the rich fragrance and fine flavor of miso were said to penetrate and season other foods. For this reason, in the Kyoto area miso is still occasionally called *mushi* or *bamushi* meaning 'insect or honorable insect'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shurtleff, William & Aoyagi, Akiko. *The Book of Miso* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1983), pg. 221.

## The Book of Miso

The hardcover edition of *The Book of Miso* is out of print. However, we have just learned that a few hundred copies remain available from The Soyfoods Center. This is the beautiful, large format, second edition, with over 400 recipes: the single most comprehensive book about miso and its many health benefits. Please call 925 283-2991 if you would like to obtain a copy.

## Apprenticeship Positions



*Maria Rossi, miso apprentice 1999*

Over the twenty years that South River Miso has been in existence, many people have come to visit, live, work and apprentice with us.

In September 2000, apprenticeship positions will again be available. Each position requires active physical work and an open attitude to the idea that food itself can be our best medicine. Depending on individual interest, there is opportunity for hands-on learning experience with all facets of our business. Private living quarters and a stipend are provided.

Become part of the South River community, where these activities are ongoing: garden work, growing rice and other grain crops, seed saving, animal care, bread baking, cooking at community meals, cabin building, and working in the woods.

If you wish to know more about our apprenticeship positions, call us at 413-369-4057, or write and ask for further information.

## Meet Yukio Doyama

Yukio Doyama was born in Tokyo in 1949, just one month after his older brother, Shotaro, died of pneumonia at age three. Bereaved over the loss of their young son, his parents named their new arrival, Yukio, meaning “Happy Man.” He grew up in Tokyo with two sisters, in the midst of rapid cultural change. Although his mother served miso soup every morning, even through his college years, Yukio felt no special ties to the traditional foods of Japan. Like so many in his generation, the eye of his soul was looking to the West. He studied economics at Meiji University and, upon graduation, began a long career with Yamatane Corporation, an international warehousing company with offices in New York City. While living in New York for two years, he met Janice Ladenheim, a student at NYU, who was working as a waitress at a Japanese restaurant, which became Yukio’s favorite place to eat, and not just because of the food.

Yukio returned to company headquarters in Tokyo. Meanwhile, Janice went to Kyoto for two years to teach English and fell in love with Japan. While she returned to New York to earn a master’s degree in International Relations at Columbia, Yukio was transferred to Kobe. Janice joined him there, and, in 1983, they were married.

Three years later Yukio returned to work in New York and to a fast paced life in Manhattan. Janice earned another degree, this time in Library Science, before giving birth, in 1990, to a daughter they named Mayumi, which means “truly beautiful and kind.” Soon thereafter, they began looking for a more rural environment and a good school. When Mayumi was five, they



settled into a co-housing community in Amherst, Mass., not far from Hartsbrook Waldorf School and not far from Conway.

Seeing jars of South River Miso on the shelves of a local natural food store, Yukio thought, “That’s nice. Someone nearby is making miso!” He did not think then about working here, but Janice called Gaella Elwell, found lots to talk about, and they all came to visit. It was Yukio’s first-ever visit to a miso shop in any part of the world. The following week he was working with us.

This kind and energetic man has brought a great deal of stability and continuity to our company. If you are grateful for its existence, you can be sure he has a lot to do with it. This fall marks his fifth consecutive season here. If it were the Major Leagues, one would have to say that Yukio is our veteran right hander and also our “iron man” at second. He is always ready to run extra bases. Quiet, patient, strong, dependable ... gentle in his words and deeds, these impressions come easily to mind when I think of Yukio. We are all very happy that this “Happy Man” is here.

## MAKING MISO IN THE NOURISHING TRADITION



*Cooking with wood fire.*



*Inoculating the steamed grain with koji culture (*Aspergillus oryzae*)*



*Two days later, harvesting the cultured grain koji.*

# Cooking for Life *with South River Miso*

## Instant Miso Broth

- 1 cup hot water
- 1 tsp. Three Year Miso or 1-2 tsp. One Year Miso

Mixed into a cup of hot water, miso makes a delicious morning start-up, a good substitute for coffee. Use Dandelion Leek Miso for an especially nice instant broth.

## Basic Miso Soup

- 2 tsp. oil
- 1 cup onions, thinly sliced
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 2 cups finely chopped cabbage or other greens
- 1 quart water
- 3½ Tbs. Three Year Miso or
- 3-5 Tbs. One Year Miso

Heat oil in heavy pot. Add onions, carrots and sauté 2-3 mins. Add water, cover, bring to boil, and simmer 10 mins. Add cabbage and simmer 2-3 mins. Cream miso with a little of the broth, add to soup, and turn off heat. Serve garnished with minced parsley. Serves 4.

## Miso Happy, Green Goddess Dressing

- ½ cup olive oil
- 3 tbsp. cider or rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp. Sweet White Miso
- 1½ tsp. chopped garlic
- 1-2 tbsp. fresh chives, chopped
- 1 tsp. honey
- 2-3 tbsp. water

Mix ingredients in a blender until a creamy, smooth texture is obtained.

## Tamari Marinade

In the morning, place Tuna steak (or other fish or chicken cuts) in a shallow bowl. Add ½ cup South River Miso Tamari, cover, and refrigerate. At lunchtime, turn the fish over. For evening meal, remove fish and bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Tender as can be.

## South River Miso Hummus

- 1 cup cooked chickpeas
- 4 tbsp. Tobum Sesame Tabini
- 2 tbsp. South River Chick Pea Miso or other light miso
- 2 cloves garlic (optional)
- Juice of one lemon
- Olive oil (optional)
- Fresh parsley

Drain chickpeas and keep cooking liquid aside. Blend all ingredients together except olive oil (use “pulse” setting on blender). Add cooking liquid as needed for desired consistency. Put in serving dish and drizzle olive oil on top. Garnish with fresh parsley.

Thanks to Maria Rossi for this delicious recipe.

## Robin's Open Face, Sardine Sandwich

Mix 1/3 Azuki Miso with 2/3 Mayo to equal a generous spread and apply to one piece of bread. Place sardines on top of the spread. Top off with a slice of ripe tomato. YUMMY! Submitted by our own, Robin Cole.



Vegetables cut for miso soup (The Book of Miso).

## Frequently Asked Questions about Miso

How long does miso keep? I've had a jar in my refrigerator for about a year. Is it still OK to use?

Because of its salt content, miso will keep indefinitely under refrigeration. It is fine to use miso that has been in the fridge for a year or more.

I have heard it is best not to cook miso; if so, how do I make miso soup?

When cooking with South River Miso it is always good to remember that it is a living food. Unpasteurized miso is rich in live enzymes. Furthermore, each teaspoonful contains millions of active microorganisms which are beneficial to the dynamic digestion and assimilation of all foods, and which help to establish and maintain a healthy, vigorous digestive system. For these reasons, miso should not be subject to prolonged cooking or high heat. Add miso at the end of cooking and turn the heat source down very low or remove soup from the stove and serve several minutes later, allowing the flavors to blend.

How much miso should I use?

For greatest benefit miso should be used in small amounts on a regular basis. A few teaspoons per day would be average use. When seasoning soup, begin by adding a small amount of miso — one to two teaspoons per cup of liquid — adding more if needed. Miso soup should taste neither too salty nor too bland. The miso should mingle with the flavor of the soup and enhance, but not overpower it.



4 Cooling the beans after they've been cooked by wood fire for 20 hours.



5 Raw miso, after the cooked beans have been mashed and mixed with the salted grain koji.



6 Miso aging in the wooden vats, three years for some varieties.





*Miso-making time at South River Farm: cooking with wood fire.*

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