

123. *Umeboshi*

2½ lbs. green plums

1 lb. salt

shiso leaves

Choose small, thick meated plums. It is alright if they are slightly yellowed. Wash well and soak overnight covered by 3 inches of water.

Next morning, strain the plums in a bamboo strainer. Do not use metal as this makes the plums turn yellow.

Put a handful of salt in a soy sauce keg or crock. Mix the plums with salt and put in the keg. Then cover with 3 handful of salt. Put a wooden lid on top of the plums and a heavy rock on top of that. Cover whole thing with heavy paper and tie in place to keep dust out. Keep in a cool place.

One or two months later when *shiso* is available, take some fresh *shiso* leaves and wash them well in cold water. Mix with salt and rub them between your hands till juice comes out. The first juice is black. Throw this away. Rub the leaves again and keep this juice in a bowl. This is *chirimen shiso* and is red colored. Squeeze the leaves into little balls and put into the juice.

Put the *shiso* into the plums but first save some of the plum juice. This is a very strong tonic for the stomach. Take 1 tea-spoon in the morning and it will destroy harmful stomach bacteria. It is 2,000 times more effective than formalin.

When adding the *shiso* to the plums break the leaf balls apart and the juice will change to a beautiful magenta color.

In July or August, take the plums out of the juice and spread them on a bamboo mat to dry in the sun. Squeeze some *shiso* leaves and dry them too, but leave a handful in the juice. When the leaves are completely dry, store for use as a condiment, crumbled over rice.

At night put the plums back in the juice and leave outside. Repeat this for 3 days.

Then store the plums either dry in a jar or in some of the juice.

Save excess juice to make salad dressings or ginger pickles. Or make a summer drink by mixing 1 tablespoon juice into a glass of water.