

South River Currents

NOURISHING LIFE FOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT SINCE 1979.™

Fall/Winter 2007/2008



“Although a variety of naturally made miso is available in natural food stores, South River Miso due to its ingredients and manufacturing methods is a unique cultural artifact, a remnant of taste and quality from Japan’s centuries old handcrafted miso tradition.”

—John Belleme,
author of *Cooking with Japanese Foods*



Autumn is a time of great abundance and activity at South River Farm and South River Miso Company. While nature is slowly turning inward for its long winter sleep, we are quickening to the pace of our busiest season. All the vats from the summer fermentations are opened for harvest. And although we are now producing miso throughout the year, winter is the season we receive most orders and ship the most miso.

As cold nights turn the leaves to gold, the fire beneath the great kettle glows. Sweaters and coats come out of storage as our appetites grow. Colorful, plump, and amusing winter squash, sleek hardy leeks, and deep green kale come in from the farmland to grace our tables.

How perfectly miso complements the tastes of autumn with its savory, salty depth and wide array of colors: the rich russet Hearty Brown Rice, the cheery yellow Golden Millet and Chick Pea, burgundy Azuki, and the caramel Sweet Tasting Brown Rice.

Greetings to all of you, new friends and old, and thank you for your continued interest, connection, and support.

Christian and Gaella Ellwell

What Is Miso?

Miso is a delicious, all-purpose, high protein seasoning which has been an important staple in Japanese cuisine for over 2000 years. It is used for many of the same purposes that we in the west use salt. Miso is usually made from a combination of soybeans, cultured grain, and salt by a unique fermentation and aging process which was elevated to a state of fine craftsmanship in old Japan.

Unpasteurized miso is a living fermented food containing natural digestive enzymes, *Lactobacillus*, and other microorganisms which aid in digestion, and ward off and destroy harmful microorganisms, thereby helping to create a healthy, active immune system.

Research has also shown that miso can help cleanse the body of toxins from nicotine, radiation, and atmospheric pollution as well as helping to dissolve accumulations of cholesterol. Overall miso has an alkalizing effect on the bloodstream, a condition thought to promote resistance to disease.*

In traditional Japan, miso gained a special place in the minds and hearts of generations who came to enjoy miso soup as an essential part of their daily life.

* William Shurtleff, *The Book of Miso* (Ten Speed Press: 1983), chapter 2



Yukio Doyama, production manager, transfers miso from the mixing box. Growing up in Japan, Yukio has been familiar with miso all his life. “I like miso soup”, he says, “but for lunch everyday I make a sandwich, with mayonnaise, garlic red pepper miso, tomato, cheese, and lettuce. That tastes so great!” The name “Yukio” means Happy Man.



German and Yukio moving miso from the production room to the fermentation vats after the treading and mixing process.

In her delightful book, *How to Cook with Miso*, Aveline Kushi writes: “The Japanese compare miso-making to the cultivation of plants. They say that miso, like all living things, is an expression of the attitude, devotion, and sincerity of its creator.”

Meet the Miso Makers

German (pronounced Her-mon) Perico is in his fourth season with South River Miso as the production assistant. German grew up in Columbia, S. A., and came to the states at age 18 to study advertising. He worked in advertising for a little while during college, but didn't like it very much. “It was not enjoyable for me,” he says. “It was just a career... Then I came to the realization that the real career is within you. *Life is a career!* It doesn't have to be a profession, but you can live with professionalism, and that's living with integrity and awareness.”

German works with production manager Yukio Doyama. Together they make about 100,000 pounds of miso per year, with some additional help during the summer months. The production calendar follows a quiet, steady rhythm which repeats itself every week throughout the year: steaming the grain, making the koji, cooking the beans over the wood fire, treading and mixing the raw miso which is then put into the fermentation vats (shown at right).

German believes that his first job is to develop attention, commitment, and presence

through his work in order to contribute his best. “I think the way to develop is by serving others through selflessness, and that takes work. I am serving the people that we make this miso for, and I am serving the company. Yet we have a divine heritage that links us all together. So, who am I serving? I am serving the highest in me.”

German also cleans the production rooms every Friday afternoon. After a week full of outward activity, the miso shop becomes a spotless, shining temple of silence and peace. German says, “The immersion in what you do, whatever it is, whether you own the company, or wash the toilets, makes no difference, as long as it comes with the intention of doing good.”



Miso vats lined up in our new timber framed storage building. The fermentation vats are made of American Cypress. Ten smaller vats, built in 1979, each hold about 2400 pounds of miso. Seventeen larger vats, built over the past two decades, each hold about 7600 pounds of miso. The miso ages in these vats from three months to three years depending on the variety. Radiant floor heat supplied by a wood burning furnace keeps the miso warm during the winter months.

Many thanks to Max Breiteneicher for his photos and writing skills, for helping us with this Newsletter. Max writes for our most local newspaper, the *Shelburne Falls Independent*. Visit his web site (www.maxworks.org) for a wide range of articles including an in depth interview with Christian Elwell about miso making at South River. Newsletter design and production by Jeff Potter, the *Independent's* editor and publisher.



Reduced Risk of Breast Cancer Linked to Miso Soup

We are reprinting information here about this important cancer research for new customers, and for those who may not have seen it in our past newsletter, three years ago.

An article published in the *English Journal of the National Cancer Institute* in June 2003, reports breast cancer risk was reduced by one half in Japanese women who ate three or more bowls of miso soup on an almost daily basis! Conducted by the Japan Public Health Study of Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease, the report monitored 21,852 women from 1990 to 2000. Post-menopausal women showed the highest reduction of risk.

With high quality miso available in the USA, we too can enjoy the protective health benefits of this miraculous food.

Reference: *Soy, Isoflavones, and Breast Cancer Risk in Japan*, by Yamamoto, S. in *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* Vol. 95, pgs 906-913, June 18, 2003. (To read an abstract of the article on the web go to <http://highwire.stanford.edu/cgi/search> and enter the reference information.)

Cooking for Life with South River Miso

Autumn Simplicity

One evening in September, after a day of not feeling well, I made some soup. It was as if I had discovered miso for the first time! I quickly felt energized and enjoyed a peaceful evening and a restful sleep.

- 2 cups finely chopped fall greens (I used kale from our garden)
- 3 cups water
- 1 tablespoon 3-year dark miso (I used Dandelion-Leek)
- 1 tablespoon 1-year light miso
- 1 teaspoon nutritional yeast (optional)

Add greens to cold water and bring to a boil. Simmer covered on medium heat for 10-12 minutes. Turn heat to low. Add miso and nutritional yeast (optional).

Simple, healing, and delicious! —Gaella Elwell

Egg-drop Miso Soup*

- 1 fresh organic egg
- 1 quart of soup stock or water
- ¼ cup miso
- 1 minced scallion

Optional: 1 sheet of nori (sea vegetable), toasted and cut into small pieces

Beat egg. Bring stock to boil; pour egg into boiling stock in a thin thread, stirring quickly while you pour. (If you do not stir, the egg will clump up.) The thin thread of the egg-drop cooks very quickly, rising to the surface of the soup like tiny, beautiful flowers. Boil a minute or two, then turn down flame. Place miso in a bowl, add broth, and purée. Blend purée with soup and simmer a few minutes. Garnish each bowl with nori and scallion.

Miso Hot Shot

This recipe is adapted from one sent to us from Japan by Miyuki Embree, who writes: "I love miso and I use it everyday when I cook meals for my family. Here is a special recipe that we use as a home remedy for colds. This has been well received by my Canadian in-laws; they think it really works."

- 2 teaspoons Garlic Red Pepper or other light Miso
- 1-2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons chopped scallions or onion

—Put all the ingredients in a mug and fill with hot boiling water.

—Stir and drink before going to bed.

—Next morning you will be back in great shape.

Thanks to Miyuki Embree.

Miso Relish

- 2 cups scallions (many variations are possible: f.i. minced parsley, garlic, or other fresh herbs)
- 1 heaping tablespoon of Sweet White Miso
- 2 tablespoons water

Sauté scallions. Purée miso with water and gently place on top of the scallions. Cover and cook over low flame for 5 to 10 minutes. Mix gently together to make miso-relish.

For a delicious sandwich, evenly spread miso-relish over bread. Heat a skillet, brush with oil, and toast sandwich to desired crispness. Remove from skillet, cut into wedges and serve.

Miso Mighty (Better 'n Coffee) Instant Drink†

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

Mixed into a cup of hot water, miso makes a simple and fortifying drink, a good substitute for coffee (see love letters). Use Dandelion Leek or Garlic Red Pepper for an especially nice instant broth.



* Adapted from Aveline Kushi, *How to Cook with Miso*. (Japan Publications, 1978) pg. 59.

† Adapted from William Shurtleff, *The Book of Miso* (Ten Speed Press: 1983) pg 109.



The buildings housing South River Miso Company are nestled in the atmosphere of South River Farm, where David Fisher, his wife Anna Maclay, and seasonal interns have created “Natural Roots”, a thriving, horse powered, organic CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) of about 180 member families, who come to the farm throughout the growing season to pick up their produce.

Love Letters

I received my order yesterday. This is incredible miso! I made the breakfast porridge. It is amazing. It is a pleasure doing business with South River Miso. I am pleased wit your product and your service. It is refreshing to deal with a company where excellence permeates all aspects of the business.

L.M., AKRON, OH

Dear Deb [Deb Duchin receives all our orders, ed.] Your shipment arrived today in its beautifully engineered packaging. Thank you all so much for these gifts of your lives.

G.N., SACRAMENTO, CA

Thank you very much! I had never heard of miso before my first order. I really felt a difference after drinking the first cup on the first day! My friends, family, & co-workers already think I'm over the edge... They just shake their heads while I am drinking my miso! :) :)

The other jar went to my co-worker. We were looking for an alternative to her drinking coffee and that is how I found your web site. She had asked me, “What is miso?” I said “I don't know, but I will look it up on the web.” I am glad your website came up when I did a search... She has been drinking her miso everyday and has been off coffee since. Yeah!

J.B., BROKEN ARROW, OK

I recently ordered 4 jars of your miso and sampled the Dandelion Leek Miso last night. WOW! I was blown away with HOW FABULOUS IT IS! The New York Times article [see NYT, April 11, 2007, ed.] did not do it justice. It is so rich, full-bodied, winey, savory, satisfying, and amazing. I just had some with my vegetables as a dip, and loved it. I am really looking forward to trying all the others I ordered. Thank you so much for making such a wonderful product and bringing so much pleasure and delight into my life. Best wishes,

J.U., DEDHAM, MA



www.southernrivermiso.com

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MISO COMPANY

“...each kind of miso has its own, rich, complex flavor and its own purpose—whether it be to enrich a broth or stock, to season a sauce or marinade, to work as a pickling agent, or to stand on its own, spread on vegetables or layered into casseroles. Miso is healthy and versatile and simple in composition, but its real magic comes from its ability to transform—even to elevate—other ingredients onto another level altogether.”
—Hiroki Shimbo-Bitchman, *Savour Magazine* May/June 1998. [Italics added]

