

Beni Imo (Okinawan Sweet Potato) Manju



Level: Challenging (dough handling) Prep Time: 1.5 hours

Serves: 14

Baking Time: 20 to 25 minutes



Beni Imo (Okinawan Sweet Potato) Filling:

1 pound Okinawan sweet potatoes (about 3-4 medium-sized)

4 Tbsp. white granulated sugar

2 Tbsp. unsalted butter

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. coarse kosher salt

Crust:

$2\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour + additional 1 cup for dusting/sprinkling

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. coarse kosher salt

3 large eggs

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sweetened condensed milk

3 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Other ingredient: 1 large egg yolk, well beaten (to brush on tops of manju)

For Beni Imo Filling: Clean outside of potatoes, then boil in a pot of water until soft and tender. Take potatoes out from pot and remove skin (handle w/ care - potatoes will be hot!) In a medium bowl, mash the sweet potatoes (while still hot) with the sugar, butter, and salt. Mix until creamy. Set aside to cool. Equally shape mashed sweet potatoes into 14 round balls. Place sweet potato balls in a container lined with wax or parchment paper. Cover and chill in refrigerator until crust is ready.

For Crust: Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside. In a large bowl, mix $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour, salt, eggs, sweetened condensed milk, and vanilla with a large silicone spatula or non-stick rice paddle. Mix until just combined, do not overmix. Place a large sheet of parchment paper on work surface (i.e. a cutting board or countertop). Generously sprinkle additional flour onto parchment covered work surface. Using a trigger ice cream scooper, fill it halfway with dough (Pic #1), and release onto floured work surface (Pic #2). Sprinkle the top of the dough with flour (Pic #3). Rub your clean dry hands with flour, and flatten the dough with your fingers/hands to form a thin circle (Pic #4). (Another option is to place the dough in one palm and flatten it with your other hand. However, both hands need to be constantly well-floured so dough does not stick to your fingers or palm.) Place 1 round sweet potato ball (filling) in the center of the dough (Pic #5). Bring up edges of crust to cover the sweet potato and remove any excess dough (this step is important - if you don't remove any excess dough, the manju will have a thick chewy crust on the bottom). Pinch

the dough around the sweet potato to seal. Roll manju in flour, sealing and pinching any tears in the dough (Pic #6). Dust off excess flour and place manju pinch-side down on prepared baking sheet and repeat with remaining sweet potato balls (Pic #7). When done, brush tops of manju with a beaten egg yolk (Pic #8). Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until tops are a golden yellow color. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack. Serve warm. If not eating right away, cool completely and store in an airtight container.



Pic #1



Pic #2



Pic #3



Pic #4



Pic #5



Pic #6



Pic #7



Pic #8

Notes:

- Beni imo filling can be made a day in advance.
- The dough for this crust is very pliable and fragile. Be patient and gentle when handling. Use additional flour on all surfaces (including your hands) to prevent sticking and tearing.
- I find it easier to transfer the dough from the mixing bowl to your work surface by using a trigger ice cream scooper rather than any other tool or utensil.
- Depending on how you rolled your manju, you may have a small amount of leftover dough after making all 14 manju.
- The recipe for this crust produces a thin and chewy crust, not a thick flaky crust like Pie Crust Manju (the type of manju you typically find in Hawaii).
- This crust recipe is adapted from Maangchi. "Baked Sweet Pastry Manju." 22 June 2011, www.maangchi.com/recipe/manju.