

Broccoli, Chicken & Mushroom Japanese Gratin ブロッコリーとチキンのグラタン (改良版)

Serves 2



Ingredients

Main Ingredients

- 150 g broccoli florets
- 150 g chicken thigh, bite-sized pieces
- 80 g mushrooms (shimeji or sliced button mushrooms)
- 70 g carrot, small dice
- 60 g onion, finely chopped
- 60 g dry macaroni

White Sauce Base

- 20 g butter
- 20 g flour
- 300 ml soy milk (7-11 調整豆乳 preferred)

Seasoning

- ½ tsp chicken bouillon powder
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp salt (adjust at end)
- Black pepper, to taste

Gratin Topping

- 5 g breadcrumbs
- 50 g pizza cheese or mozzarella

Instructions

- 1. Cook the pasta:**
 - Bring **salted water** to a boil. Cook **macaroni 1 minute less than package instructions**. Drain and set aside.
- 2. Prepare broccoli:**
 - Cut into small florets. Steam or microwave **2–3 minutes** until just tender.
- 3. Cook chicken and vegetables:**
 - In a skillet melt **10 g butter** over **medium heat**.
 - Add **onion** and **carrot** and cook **3 minutes**.
 - Add **chicken** and cook until lightly colored.
 - Add **mushrooms** and cook another **2 minutes**.
- 4. Build the white sauce:**
 - Sprinkle **flour** over mixture and cook **1 minute**.
 - Gradually add **soy milk** in 3 additions while stirring.
 - Add **chicken bouillon, soy sauce** and **Dijon mustard**. Simmer until thick.
- 5. Combine:**
 - Add **macaroni** and **broccoli** and mix gently. Adjust seasoning.

6. Assemble gratin:

- Transfer mixture to baking dish. Sprinkle **breadcrumbs** then **cheese**.

7. Bake:

- Bake at **200°C** for **10–12 minutes** until cheese melts and browns.
- Finish with kitchen torch if desired.

Chef's Texture Trick

Stir **1 tsp butter** into the sauce just before transferring to the baking dish for a glossy restaurant-style finish.

Nutrition (per serving)

Calories: 535 kcal | Protein: 35 g | Fat: 25 g | Sat Fat: 13 g | Carbs: 44 g | Sugars: 9 g | Fiber: 5 g | Sodium: 880 mg | Omega-3: 0.2 g

Ingredient Notes (Japan)

Mushrooms: Shimeji, bunashimeji, or sliced button mushrooms work well.

Soy milk: 7-11 soy milk works well because it emulsifies nicely in roux-based sauces.

Cheese: Japanese pizza cheese blend melts evenly and is ideal for gratin.

Notes

1. Warm the Soy Milk Before Adding (Smoother Sauce)

When making a roux-based sauce, cold liquid hitting hot roux can cause small lumps.

Japanese kitchen trick

- Warm the soy milk first:
- Microwave 300 ml soy milk for ~40 seconds
- It should be warm but not hot
- Then add it gradually to the roux.

Result:

- smoother sauce
- thickens more evenly
- less stirring

This works especially well with soy milk, which can separate slightly if shocked by heat.

2. Add a Small Onion Sweetness Step

A lot of café gratins do this:

After cooking the onion, sprinkle:

½ tsp sugar

Cook 1 more minute before adding chicken.

This creates a subtle caramel sweetness that balances the creamy sauce.
Very Japanese flavor balance.

3. The “Hidden Umami” Ingredient

Many Japanese gratins secretly include one of these:

- ½ tsp soy sauce
- ¼ tsp miso
- a pinch of MSG

There is already soy sauce in this recipe

It makes the sauce taste deeper but you don't taste soy sauce directly.

4. The Two-Cheese Browning Trick

Restaurants rarely use only one cheese.

Mix:

- 35 g pizza cheese
- 15 g Parmesan

Parmesan browns faster and gives those golden spots like the photo.

5. Oil the Dish First

Brush the baking dish with a tiny bit of oil or butter before adding the gratin.

Result:

- edges caramelize slightly
- gratin releases more easily

Very common in Japan.

6. The Breadcrumb Layer Trick (Already Added)

This is used constantly in Japan.

Layer order:

gratin mixture

light breadcrumbs

cheese

The breadcrumbs absorb fat and create a light crispy crust under the cheese.

7. Professional Browning Trick (Perfect for Your Oven)

Since your oven doesn't have a broiler, do this:

After baking:

Drizzle ½ tsp olive oil on the cheese.

Torch lightly.

The oil helps the cheese blister and brown.

An Interesting Cultural Detail

Japanese gratin is actually descended from French naval cooking in Yokosuka in the late 1800s, then adapted in cafés during the Taishō and early Shōwa eras.

That's why it often includes:

- *macaroni*
- *chicken*
- *onion*
- *mild cheese*

It became a comfort food staple in Japanese cafés and family kitchens.