

Chinese Fermented Sweet Rice (*Jiu Niang*)

<http://userealbutter.com/2015/02/04/chinese-fermented-sweet-rice-jiu-niang-recipe/>
from my mom and grandma

2.5 lbs. (about 5 cups) quality sweet rice (also called glutinous rice – which does not contain any gluten), uncooked

1 (about 10g) Chinese rice wine yeast ball (if you can't find it in an Asian grocery store, [Amazon carries it](#))

Notes: I cannot stress enough how important it is to make sure all utensils, cheesecloth (if using), steamer (if using), vessels, strainers, hands, sink, mortar and pestle, etc. are absolutely clean and free of any grease. The presence of grease will cause your sweet rice to mold within 24 hours and render it inedible. So wash everything you are using carefully and thoroughly with extremely hot water before you start the process.

Prepare the rice: Rinse the rice in cold water and drain in a sieve. Repeat two more times for a total of three rinses (triple wash). You might have to do this in batches. That's okay. There are two methods to cook the sweet rice: a steamer (traditional) or a rice cooker (modern).

To steam the rice: Soak the grains overnight (12 hours) in enough cold water to cover the rice by 2-3 inches. Drain the rice, rinse, and drain again. Fill the bottom pot of a steamer set or a large pot or wok (that fits your steamer basket) a third full of water and bring the water to a boil. Line a large steamer basket (or two) with a double layer of clean cheesecloth that extends beyond the steamer basket (you want overhang so you don't lose any grains). Evenly spread a 1/2-inch layer of rice over the cheesecloth. Don't pile the rice on thicker than this or the grains may not steam all the way through. You can stack 2 layers of steamer baskets at a time over the boiling water, but most likely the rice will have to cook in 2 batches. Cover the top of the steamer basket with a tight fitting lid and steam for about 20 minutes (it may take longer). Check the grains to see if they are translucent, but not mushy. You don't want any opaque bits (uncooked) in the centers either. When the rice is cooked, place all of the cooked grains into a large strainer and rinse thoroughly in very cold water until the rice no longer feels warm (we want to stop the cooking). Place the rice in a large, wide bowl. If you are cooking the rice in batches, check the water levels in your steamer base and get the remaining uncooked rice ready for the steamer and repeat.

To cook the rice using a rice cooker: For this volume of rice, you will have to cook it in 2-3 batches. If using a modern rice cooker with a "sweet rice" setting, follow the manufacturer's instructions for cooking the sweet rice. If using the older models of rice cookers, place 3 cups of rice and 2 1/2 cups of water in the cooker pan and set to cook. When the rice is cooked, place the cooked grains in a large strainer and rinse in very cold water until the rice is no longer warm (to stop the cooking). Place the rice in a large, wide bowl. Repeat for the subsequent batches.

Begin fermentation: Crush the yeast ball into a powder using a mortar and pestle. Sprinkle half of the yeast evenly over the rice. Using a gloved or very clean hand, mix the yeast into the rice to distribute the yeast as evenly as possible. Sprinkle the remaining half of the yeast evenly over the rice and mix again. At this stage, you can press the rice into a large clean glass jar (large – like a gallon size is what I would use) or press it down into the large bowl (that’s what I did). Mom says to use a vessel with at least 20% headspace or else when the rice wine forms, it will overflow and make a mess. With your fingers, make a well in the center of the rice all the way to the bottom of the vessel. Cover the bowl or jar tightly with plastic wrap and poke a few air holes into the top with a sharp knife. Set the vessel in a warm (75°F-80°F), dry place for 24 hours. I found that my oven with the oven light turned on worked nicely. After 24 hours, there should be liquid (rice wine) starting to accumulate in the well and no mold. If the rice has molded, you’ll have to throw it out (sorry!). If the rice has not molded, then continue to let the rice ferment for another 24-48 hours in the warm place. The rice will begin floating as more rice wine is produced. It should smell like sake and taste sweet and slightly boozy. When the flavor is to your liking, divvy up the rice and liquid among smaller jars, seal, and refrigerate. It should be good for several months. Makes 3 quarts.

Chinese Fermented Sweet Rice Soup (*Jiu Niang Tang Yuan*)

1 cup Chinese fermented sweet rice (*jiu niang*)
2-3 tbsps sugar (depending on how sweet the fermented rice is and your taste preference)
1-2 tsps osmanthus flowers, dried or in a preserve (optional)
6 cups water
1/4 cup glutinous rice balls (*tang yuan*)
1 egg, beaten (optional)
1 tbsp cornstarch (optional)
2 tbsps water

Place the Chinese fermented sweet rice, sugar, osmanthus flowers, and 6 cups of water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. When the water is boiling, add the rice balls. When the rice balls float to the surface (about 3-4 minutes), stir the soup with a spoon and slowly pour the beaten egg in a steady stream into the soup. Mix the cornstarch with 2 tablespoons of water in a small bowl. When the soup returns to a boil, stir the cornstarch mixture into the pan. When the soup thickens, turn off the heat and serve. Serves 4.