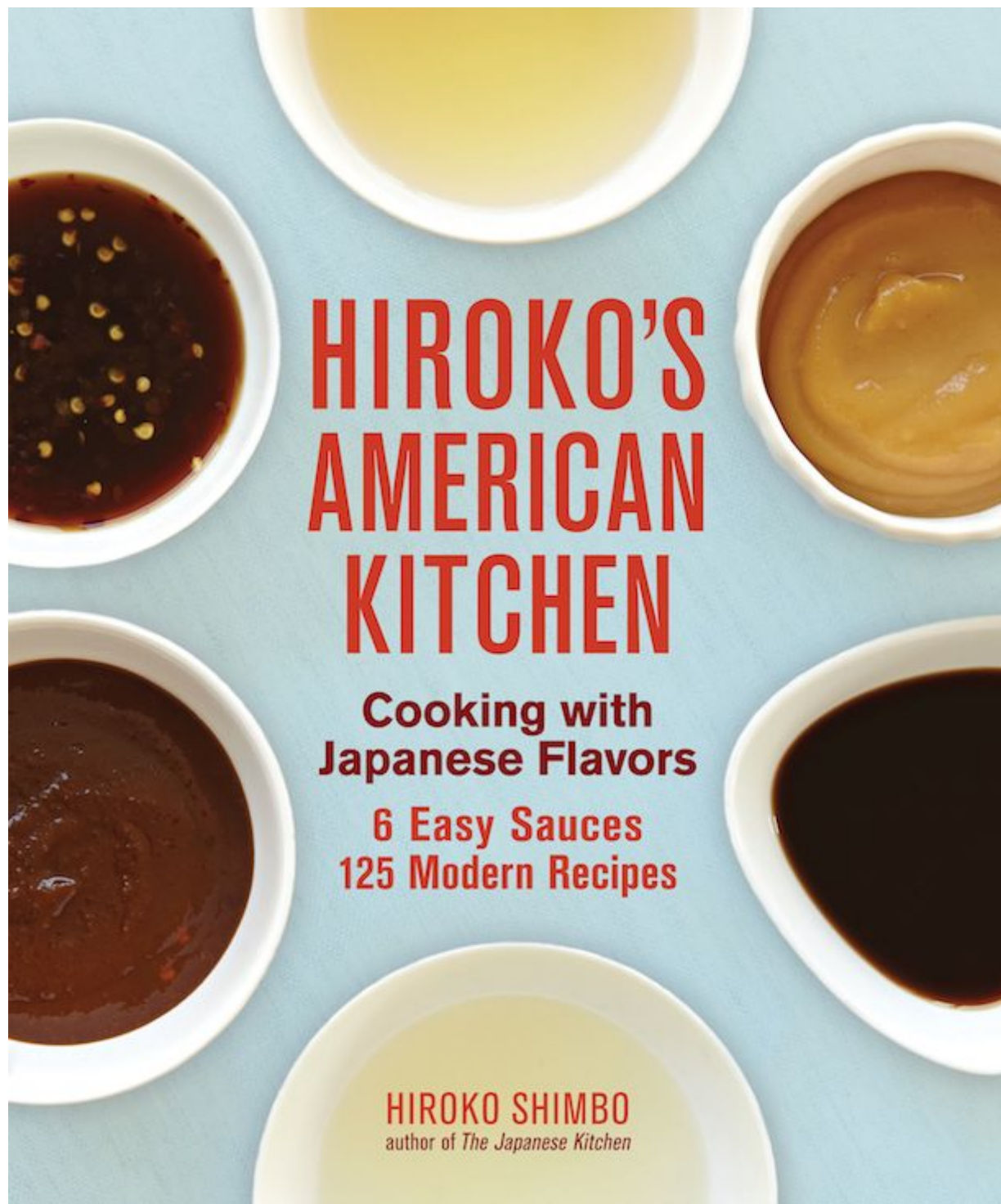


Cook the Book: 'Hiroko's American Kitchen'

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When you pick up most internationally focused cookbooks these days, you'll usually find a slew of foreign ingredients, cooking techniques, and flavors. Much of the focus is on teaching new skills and concepts, each designed to broaden the scope of American home kitchens. Cooking from these books requires a big shift in thinking as well as a major shopping trip for all kinds of new ingredients.

There's nothing wrong with such culturally specific books, but sometimes a gentler transition between cuisines is welcome. Enter **Hiroko Shimbo's** new cookbook, *Hiroko's American Kitchen*. Shimbo is a renowned Japanese cook, and has previously won accolades for her seriously Japanese cookbooks, *The Japanese Kitchen* and *The Sushi Experience*. This new book is a change of pace for Shimbo and offers a breath of exciting new air to her readers.

Hiroko's American Kitchen is divided into six sections, each focused on one basic stock or sauce. (Five of the six are classic Japanese recipes, like **dashi** and **shumiso**; the sixth is Shimbo's own invention, called "super sauce.") Each sauce serves as the anchor for a broad set of recipes—some are rooted in Japan, while most are twists on American favorites. Shimbo is tuned in to the typical American household and grocery store, so the ingredients are easy to find, the techniques are simple, and the flavors are fairly mild.

But just because Shimbo takes an all-inclusive approach to Japanese-American cooking doesn't mean that she wants us all to cook mild, hokey, fusion cuisine. Instead, the book is an extension of the Japanese tradition of sharing and blending food cultures. Bites of her food taste of both America and Japan melding into a new, harmonious plate.

This week, we'll sample dishes made with all of Shimbo's core sauces. First, we'll make **braised daikon** using kelp stock and spicy miso, and then follow up with a gorgeously understated plate of vegetables with **sumiso bagna cauda**. Next, we'll tackle **a big bowl of ramen** made with a dashi base and topped with rich chashu pork belly. **Sukiyaki**—a beef and vegetable dish—will make use of Shimbo's "BBC" (or best basting) sauce. Then we'll finish out the week with **chicken namban**, a vinegary dish enriched with some of that potent "super sauce."

Win 'Hiroko's American Kitchen'

Thanks to our friends at Andrews McMeel, we have five (5) copies of *Hiroko's American Kitchen* to give away this week. All you need to do to win a copy is to tell us about the ways in which you **incorporate Japanese flavors into your kitchens** (or the ways you'd like to) in the comments section below.