

Kathy Liao • Milkfish Congee 虱目魚粥

My mom grew up on the island of Punghu in Taiwan and she inhales seafood like a Midwesterner devours steaks. Of all the fishes in the sea, milkfish has a special place in her stomach. Growing up, I have fond memories of my mom, taking me to different street food stands, telling me how this stand has the best seafood congee, this stand has the best milkfish soup...etc. Some days, my mom would take me to the open market in our neighborhood in Taipei and buy fresh milkfish. Maybe because congee is so easy to cook, that is always her go-to home-cooked dish. When my dad was sick in the hospital, I remember my mom would search the local markets for milkfish congee, claiming that it is the most nutritious and nourishing for someone who is convalescing. If I ever get to request a last meal, this has to be it.



Jave Yoshimoto, *Kathy Liao's Milkfish Congee*, 2021, ink, watercolor and gouache on paper, 9" x 12".

Milkfish Congee Recipe

Ingredients:

Congee:

- Milkfish belly and head, cut the fish into 2-inch pieces (you can substitute other white fish, but milkfish is the best)
- 1 cup of day-old rice
- 6-10 cups of water or fish stock (depend on how soupy you want the congee to be)
- (if using water, add 1 spoonful of dashi)
- salt

- dash of white pepper
- dash of sesame oil
- few slices of ginger

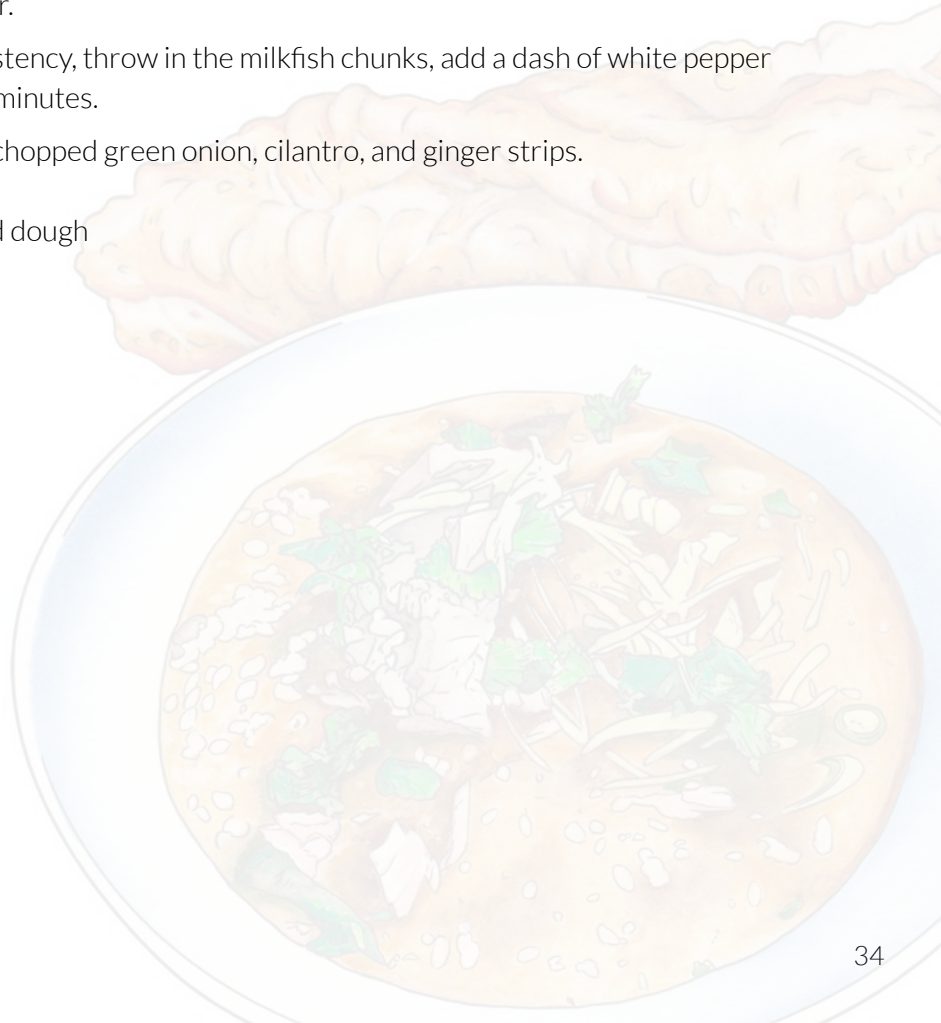
Garnish:

- 1 green onion (finely chopped)
- cilantro
- pickled ginger strips

Directions:

1. Save a cup of left-over rice.
2. In a pot, add rice, fish stock (or water and dashi), salt, and ginger slices. Bring everything to a boil at high heat, and then turn it down to a simmer.
3. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes, or when the congee starts to thicken. Sometimes, I add more water/stock halfway through to make it soupier.
4. Once congee reaches the desired consistency, throw in the milkfish chunks, add a dash of white pepper and sesame oil, and let it cook for a few minutes.
5. Dish it out in a bowl and garnish it with chopped green onion, cilantro, and ginger strips.

*best served with a side of Chinese fried dough



Kathy Liao



Drawing inspirations from her diverse cultural background and personal history, Kathy Liao's mixed media work is about the intimate yet universal concept of relationships. Liao received her MFA in Painting from Boston University and BFA in Painting and Drawing from University of Washington, Seattle. Liao is a recipient of various awards including the 2020 Charlotte Street Foundation Visual Artist Award, Elizabeth Greenshield Foundation Grant, and artist grants and fellowships from Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Vermont Studio Center, and Jentel Artist Residency. Her work was shown in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Kansas City, and many other cities nationally and internationally. In the past, Liao was Director of the Painting and Printmaking Studio Art Program at Missouri Western State University and taught at Boston University, University of Washington, Seattle University, and Gage Academy of Art. She is currently part of the Artist Services team at Mid-America Arts Alliance in Kansas City.

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Kathy Liao, In Between the Lines, 2019, site specific installation at H&R Block Artspace at the Kansas City Art Institute, collage, charcoal, marker, ink, silkscreen, oil on paper and canvas, approximately 252" x 132". Photo Credit EG Schempf.