RICE PASTE RESIST
JOHN MARSHALL: works in fabric

A resist may be anything that blocks the application of another medium. The string in "tie-dye" is a resist, as is the wax in batik. A stencil is used to block out areas of the cloth while applying color or paste, and so may also be thought of as a resist. In the context of *katazome*, the resist is the paste made from rice bran (*komon nuka* 小紋糠) and powdered sweet rice (*mochiko* 餅粉), plus a few other ingredients added in as needs dictate.

Just as in baking bread or any other cooking endeavor, there are many excellent recipes available. Find the one you like and stay with it. Continuing with the analogy, the most basic bread consists of flour and water. Anything more is extra. If you prefer leavened bread, you add yeast. The most basic paste consists of rice, bran and water. Each element is defined below. Take note of the function of each and vary your recipe according to your particular needs.

BASIC RECIPE

one part bran : one part flour : one part water

1. **Sift dry ingredients and blend together thoroughly.**
Add water gradually, distributing the moisture evenly and thoroughly before adding more.

☞The more time you spend mixing well, the more lump free your paste will turn out. A bowl too small will make it difficult to mix the ingredients.

2. **Add enough water to make the mixture the consistency of piecrust dough, or wood putty.**

☞The more time you spend mixing well, the more lump free your paste will turn out.

3. **Form little golf ball-size shapes from the dough. Place in a steamer lined with a moistened cloth and steam for one hour, or until done.**

☞So what is done? Done is when the color of the dough ball has changed color all the way through to the core. What color? It should change from about the color of manila paper when you start out, to a deeper shade about the color of peanut butter. However, cooking it until it is as dark as your stencil paper will make a lump perfect for repairing cracks in your foundation, but not viable paste.

☞So what happens if I under-cook it? Undercooking may not be detectable right away. First of all, your paste won't be very elastic while mixing it in the *suribachi*. Worse than that is when it dries on the cloth after applying it with your stencil or cone: it turns powdery and may even crumble off. Not a very good resist.

4. **Transfer the dough balls quickly to a suribachi (mortar) and mix thoroughly and vigorously with a surikogi (pestle).**

☞If you dilly-dally a crust will form and you will get lumps. The more time you spend mixing well, the more lump free your paste will turn out.

5. **Begin to add more water slowly to thin the mixture.**

☞As it cools it will thicken threatening to permanently affix itself to your lovely grooved bowl. If you dilly-dally a crust will form and you will get lumps. The more time you spend mixing well, the more lump free your paste will turn out.

6. **Continue adding water until it is of a spreading consistency.**

☞It is best to stop while it is a little on the thick side and still a bit warm. As it comes to room temperature it will thicken a bit more, but you may add water just before you're about to use it to bring it to just the right consistency for the project at hand.

☞So remember: MIX THOROUGHLY, DON'T DILLY-DALLY, AND BY ALL MEANS DON'T GET LUMPS!

7. **Transfer to a mixing bowl and cover with plastic wrap, being careful not to trap any air pockets.**

☞Clean all tools used to make the paste as soon as possible, once it hardens in the grooves of the *suribachi*, it is very difficult to get out.

8. **May be refrigerated for a day or two in anticipation of use.**

☞You will know when you've kept it too long. It begins to get yeasty and pets and family will start to avoid the room. It tends to last a bit longer in winter when there are fewer spores in the air. Don't bother to make enough to freeze. Freezing the paste causes it to take on a brittle, rubbery characteristic. To return it to its elastic state you must re-cook it, defeating the purpose of mixing some ahead.

9. **Cone method (tsutsugaki): pour paste into handkerchief weight cloth (old sheeting works well) and force out by squeezing.**

☞If even the smallest lump is tolerated in paste for *tsutsugaki*, you run the risk of having the nozzle clog at the most crucial point of a very delicate

design. It is not worth the risk. Filtering the paste through the cloth will remove even the tiniest lump.

Extra ingredients to consider using:
calx (dyer's term): a.k.a calcium hydroxide (purchase from chemist), a.k.a cal (used in making tortillas, konyaku, etc.) a.k.a lime (available through farm supply stores), a.k.a chalk (used on football fields). Dissolve a little in water (careful: it's very alkaline), add decanted solution to paste in lieu of some of the water. It should turn the paste a little yellow. The right amount will give you paste a little extra elasticity. Too much will make the paste like "silly putty". NOTE: If you live on large limestone deposits you probably won't need to add calx. It's already in your tap water.
table salt: a.k.a sodium chloride. Dissolving a little salt in water and then adding the solution to the paste in lieu of water will help to keep the paste from cracking. Salt draws moisture from the air. Moisture will keep the paste in a more leathery state, helping to keep it a bit more malleable. Too little salt won't be of much help, too much and your paste will never dry. You call it. Don't use any salt on rainy or humid days, use a bit more if you're going to be working outside on a hot windy day.
glycerin: Available through drug stores. Use with table salt. It is an emollient, so it will help to keep the paste leathery without being too influenced by the daily changes in humidity. Add a little. If your paste cracks, add more next time. If you start to get what look like oil bleed lines around the edges of your paste, you added too much.
pigments: You may find it desirable under certain circumstances to color your paste. In this case it is not used to dye the cloth (as in nassen, or yuzen techniques). Actually, any pigment you add should be totally inert. It is added only to make it easier for you to see the paste as you work on applying the resist to your yardage. Cobalt blue is commonly added as a powder to the paste in Japan to make a bluish tone and stand out in greater contrast to the natural color of the silk. This makes it easier to paste repeating patterns since it is easier to see the blue against a white layer of cloth than the natural yellow brown of the paste against the white.

John Marshall©2000