



Expert Tips for Enjoying Japan: The Gourmet Edition

Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki*

Photo: ISHIZAWA Yoji

Photography cooperation: Micchan Souhonten Shimbashi

Kaaisan is a Kyoto-based creator who promotes Japanese culture in English day-by-day. In this month's issue, Kaaisan talks about Japanese cuisine.

Kaaisan

“I had Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki* in Hiroshima, so I want to try Kansai¹-style *okonomiyaki*² in Kyoto to compare!” These words came up in a conversation I had recently with an Indian tourist visiting Japan. Although Japan is not a very large country, there are many regional differences, and the uniqueness of each region is reflected in local versions of the same types of dishes. In this issue, I will introduce some representative dishes. If you are a food connoisseur or are considering another trip to Japan, why not try to enjoy Japan as a seasoned gourmet would by comparing foods from different regions of the country?

Okonomiyaki

O*konomiyaki*, which I mentioned at the beginning of this article, is one of the most popular dishes among tourists visiting Japan from overseas. In fact, there are two main types of *okonomiyaki*. Both

types share the same flour batter and ingredients such as cabbage, pork or seafood, etc. However, the cooking method is different. For the Kansai-style *okonomiyaki*, all the ingredients are mixed before grilling. Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki*, on the other hand, is prepared by piling each ingredient on top of the other and grilling, with thinly sliced cabbage and usually noodles. I recommend trying both styles.

Ramen

R*amen*, which is enjoying growing popularity around the world, is another type of dish with diverse characteristics that vary from region to region and restaurant to restaurant. *Tonkotsu* (pork bone broth) *ramen*, mainly from the Hakata region of Kyushu³ is characterized by a strong aroma and thin noodles; *miso ramen* from Sapporo in Hokkaido⁴ is made with thick noodles topped with corn and other vegetables; and soy sauce-based *ramen* from Tokyo is a classic noodle dish that has



Kansai-style *okonomiyaki*

Photo: ISHIZAWA Yoji

Photography cooperation: BOTEJYU

been beloved over the years for its simplicity.

It is said that there are about 200 varieties of *ramen* including light salt-based *ramen*, *ramen* with seafood-based broth, and various regional specialties, etc. In addition, local *ramen* varieties are often sold in packaged kits that can be prepared at home. These kits make great souvenirs.

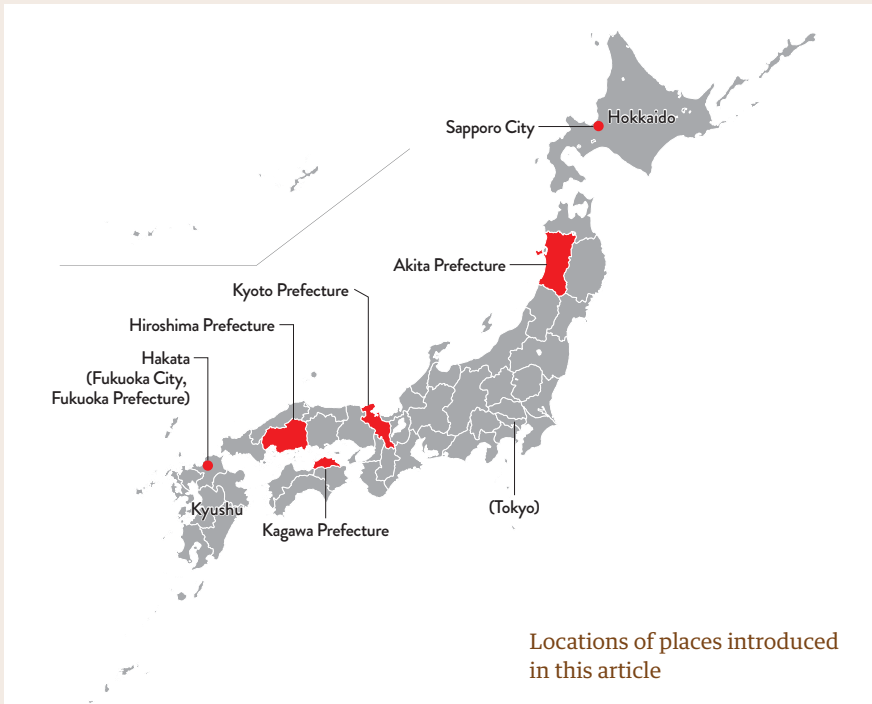
Udon

Made from wheat-based noodles and a broth called *dashi* or *tsuyu*, depending on the



Kaaisan

Creator of English-language short film introductions to Japan. She manages an online community for like-minded people interested in Japanese culture and worldview to meet and learn together. She also plans and organizes various events on an irregular basis.



Locations of places introduced in this article

region, with meat, vegetables, or other toppings, *udon* is a deceptively simple dish, but in fact there are reportedly more than 30 varieties of *udon*. The Sanuki Udon of Kagawa Prefecture is famous throughout Japan. It is characterized by its firm noodles with a chewy texture. Kagawa Prefecture is so renowned for its *udon* noodles that it has promoted itself as “The Udon Prefecture.” Next in popularity is the Inaniwa Udon from Akita Prefecture. It is characterized by its thin, flat noodles and is favored for its light, simple flavor. There are many other types of *udon*, so try to find the one you like best.

Japan has a strong artisanal national character, so Japan is home to a large number of restaurants specializing in a

particular type of cuisine, with each restaurant striving to be the best. Visitors should take advantage of opportunities to travel around the country and enjoy the unique styles and flavors of each region and restaurant.



Sanuki Udon

Photo: ISHIZAWA Yoji
Photography cooperation: Tokyo Mentsudan



Hakata Ramen

Photo: ISHIZAWA Yoji
Photography cooperation: ICHIRYU



Sapporo Ramen

Photo: ISHIZAWA Yoji
Photography cooperation: Ramen Kaede



Inaniwa Udon

Photo: PIXTA

1. The area roughly around Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, and their neighboring prefectures
2. A dish consisting of flour-based batter, cabbage, and other ingredients such as pork or seafood, grilled on a hot plate and served with sauce or mayonnaise
3. The area is the southwestern part of the four main islands of Japan, including Fukuoka.
4. Japan's northernmost island, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, the Sea of Japan, and the Sea of Okhotsk