

## 創刊準備号

# Special Feature Addicted to Soba

**There are three major groups of Japanese noodle, "udon", "soba", and "ramen." The main difference between soba and other noodles is ingredients. Soba noodles are made from buckwheat flour, which has high nutritional value, not only from flour. Many overseas countries have dishes that use buckwheat noodles - Italy, France, Russia, South Korea, and Nepal all do. A Japanese buckwheat noodle (soba) recipe is probably the most simple of all to prepare and eat. All that is required is to soak the noodles in a special dipping sauce, made of soy sauce and dried bonito.**

## Scent is a conclusive factor

Enjoying eating soba is equal to enjoying its scent. Enjoying its scent is just one of the sophisticated aspects of Japanese culture. However, it is difficult to enjoy the original scent of buckwheat at home. Quickness is the most important factor in cooking it. It all depends on the time between making the buckwheat noodles from flour, and cooking and eating them. If you would like to taste real soba, it is best to go to a hand-made buckwheat-noodles specialty restaurant. Although this type of soba restaurant is in a minority, they do exist.

This type of restaurant uses buckwheat grown in Japan. It is carefully ground with a stone mortar. A large quantity is never ground, only the amount needed that day is made. The chefs are also particular about all aspects of making the noodles - they use a special dipping sauce, and certain spices (wasabi, grated radish etc). 'Kikoan' (Chuo-ku, Sapporo-shi) is a soba specialty restaurant, and they can tell us all about enjoying the scent of soba. Mr. Agishi, the owner says, "the best time

for the scent is when pouring water into the buckwheat flour to make dough." Therefore, before the scent disappears, it is necessary to hand make the noodles, boil them and serve them to the customer immediately. Needless to say, speed is the most important thing. Here are three tips for good tasting soba (when eaten cold).



## Tips for eating soba at restaurants

### **Eat it as soon as possible**

Hand made soba tends to expand if kept in fluid. If dinner conversation with friends and family takes a lively turn, and the soba is not eaten immediately, the delicacy of the special noodles will be lost.

### **Don't put all parts of the soba into the dipping sauce**

Don't let all of the soba held with chopsticks fall into the dipping sauce. The reason is that the scent of soba is lost when it fights against the scent of the dipping sauce. Two good tips are to

only put the lower half of the soba in the dipping sauce, and to eat it quickly.

### **Don't put wasabi into the dipping sauce**

Some soba specialty restaurants use real wasabi, not kneaded wasabi. They grate it only for the dish that needs it. Real wasabi is not spicy, and is sweet-smelling in the mouth. If you put wasabi into the dipping sauce, the scent of the wasabi will be lost against the scent of the soba. The correct way is to attach the wasabi to the soba and to put the lower half of the soba in the dipping sauce. The scent spreads in the mouth.

## Tips for eating soba at home

Although eating soba at home is inferior to doing it at a specialty restaurant, there are the ways of making it taste delicious. Mr. Agishi, owner of 'Kikoan,' gave us some tips for making soba at home. Obviously, eat soba as soon as possible after cooking. Because soba expands easily, caution is required.

### **Wash in very cold water after boiling**

It is important to put soba into cold water immediately after boiling it. Even if you want to eat hot soba, it is necessary to wash it in cold water. It does not matter whether the soba will be eaten hot or cold. The reason it is washed is in order to get rid of a small amount of slime that

gathers on the surface of the noodles. Also, this tightens the soba. Ice cold is a good temperature for the cold water. If you want to eat hot soba, you need to put the noodles back into hot water to heat them, after washing with cold water. The bowl also needs to be warm.

### **Remove the moisture on the noodles**

This is a tip when eating cold soba. Don't put the noodles straight in the soup after they have been cooled by iced water. If you don't remove the moisture on the surface of the noodles, the soba will absorb the moisture and expand quickly. The best way to get rid of the moisture is to use a sieve.

## Health and Beauty

**Soba is nutritious compared to other noodles. Buckwheat flour has nutritional value, but not ordinary flour. In particular, the polyphenol 'rutin' is thought to make minds healthy, and improve memory. Also, soba is good for beauty and effective in avoiding aging.**



## What soba contains in abundance 1 ---Protein

Soba contains as much protein as eggs. Of course this is more than rice, bread and other noodles.

## What soba contains in abundance 2 ---Vitamin B group

Soba in particular contains a lot of the vitamin B group.

Vitamin B 1 prevents heart disease and can reduce loss of appetite.

Vitamin B 2 can prevent high blood pressure, and arteriosclerosis.

It also keeps the skin healthy.

## What soba contains in abundance 3 ---Polyphenol rutin

Rutin contributes to the strengthening of blood vessels, activates pancreas function, strengthens memory, and prevents aging.

When oxygen free radicals (from breathing) increase in number beyond necessity, cell damage occurs, which results in aging and may be a cause of cancer. Moreover, the number of causes that generate oxygen free radicals is increasing. Stress, smoking, food additives, exhaust gas, ultraviolet rays, etc. all increase free radicals. Rutin, which is an anti-oxidant, is helpful in fighting their increase.

---

# Effects on Beauty and Diet

When the calories of rice, bread, and soba are measured, they are almost the same. However, eating only steamed rice or only bread is nutritionally not good for you, and not delicious. When it comes to soba however, eating only soba

is possible. Buckwheat noodles contain moderate quantities of minerals and vitamins. It is obviously low in calories. In addition, it contains abundant dietary fiber, it is good for constipation.

---

# Japanese Culture and Soba

## “SOBA CUSTOMS”

### Hikkoshi Soba

When people move in to a new house, Hikkoshi Soba is eaten. It is also said that this custom started in the Edo period.

The origin is in a pun – soba has two meanings. One is buckwheat noodles, the other is to be near. In eating Hikkoshi Soba, people wish for a happy life with their neighbor, for a long time.

### Toshikoshi Soba

It seems that the custom of eating soba on New Year's Eve, December 31 started during the Edo period.

There are a several meanings given to Toshikoshi Soba. Two often quoted meanings are given below.

#### Live a long life

To eat it is to make a wish to live for a long time, and for continuing good luck forever.

#### Helps cut with the past

Eating it can help people break away from difficulties, or evil influences, for one year.

## COMIC STORY “RAKUGO”

Soba sometimes appears in Japanese culture. ‘Toki Soba’ is a good example. If you hear this name, and know what it refers to, you are familiar with Rakugo. ‘Toki Soba’ is a famous Rakugo comic story. It is a story about a man who tries to pay a lower price for his meal, and instead loses money. When you hear a comic telling this story, listen for the sounds made with the mouth, to indicate the sound of noodles being eaten. This is a feature of this particular story. Even if you already know the story, you can still enjoy it.



### Toki Soba

One day in winter, a man eats soba at a stall. The man speaks well of everything he sees all the time while eating.

He praises the signboard, chopsticks, bowl, soup, ingredients and of course, the soba as well.

When he comes to pay his money, a conversation with the owner starts. “How much?” The owner says “16 coins” (the correct denomination is ‘Mon’ rather than ‘coins’).

The man starts to count. “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight.” When he counts the eighth coin, he suddenly asks. “What time is it now?”

The owner says, “It is nine o’clock.”

The man starts to count again. “Ten, eleven ...” This man succeeded in saving one coin.

There is another man who has seen this from the beginning. He decides to imitate this idea.

The following day, he eats soba at a stall. He is about to praise everything, but everything around him is so bad. So he cannot speak well of anything. Finally, he tries to cheat the owner.

“How much?”

“16 coins.”

He starts to count. “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight.” When he counts the eighth coin, he suddenly asks.

“What time is it now?”

The owner says, “It is four o’clock.”

The man starts to count again. “Five, six, seven...”



Thanks to 'Kikoan'  
2nd Floor Suzukake Building  
Nishi 17 Chome Minami 3 Jyo  
Chuo-Ku Sapporo-Shi  
Tel:011-616-4181  
Open  
Mon., Wed. to Sat.  
11:00 ~ 15:00 18:00 ~ 20:00 last order  
Sun, National Holiday  
11:00 ~ 17:00