

The fascinating Japanese food; Soba—the buckwheat noodles.

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How to eat soba (in the Tokyo style)

1. Pick up a couple of noodles with your chopsticks and taste them without dipping.
2. Next, taste the dipping sauce, and then put the noodles halfway into the dipping sauce and slurp them up. Pick up four or five noodles at one time. It makes easier to slurp in the Tokyo style. It's cool!
3. Use a small amount of condiments to your liking. I recommend that you use the weaker condiments first and the stronger condiments last.

So in this first case, first use the daikon radish and next Tokyo onion.

On the other hand, wasabi radish should not be put into the soba dipping sauce.

Instead, lick them off the tip of a chopstick. It will help to refresh your palate.

4. After enjoyed all the soba on the container, make the cup of broth thinner with "soba-yu" and taste it.

Soba-yu is the boiling hot water to cook soba noodle with in a large soba boiling pot.

Soba restaurant staffs serve "soba-yu" to their guests in a "yutoh pot."

Popularity of soba in Japan

Soba cuisine has enjoyed widespread popularity for over 400 years in Japan.

There are a couple of reasons that soba gives a strong appearance to Japanese people for a long time. Soba has light and sweet taste, energy-giving and well-balanced nutrition. These reasons make soba as a perfect food for any season in Japan.

Japanese loves soba, with its taste, with its shape, with its lovely smell, and also its slurping sound.

There are over 30,000 soba restaurants in Japan, and near around 5,000 restaurants are in Tokyo.

We can estimate that around 10 percent or less of these perform the entire soba making process by hand.

Handmade soba is a kind of quality soba. It would be just a little bit costly to machine-made soba.

In summary, there are far different two types of soba existing in Japan.

Both of them are attractive to me, but in my opinion, handmade soba is really special to me.

How to cook soba (Does soba need to finish boiling at the "al dente?")

1. It's very important to boil a large amount of water. At least five liters per serving is recommended.
2. The boiling time depends on the noodle thickness.

To cook the regular thickness of soba, you'll need about one and a half minutes.

And if the soba is thicker then you'll need to cook longer.

3. Make sure the noodles are cooked completely.

If the noodles aren't boiled for long enough, they will be too hard to eat.

Good noodles are pliable and full-bodied.

Scoop up the cooked noodles with a strainer, and set the noodles down briefly in a bowl of cold water.

I'd like to mention it again, soba need to finish boiling at the post "al dente" and being cooked completely.

What are the differences between soba and common wheat noodles

Soba is quite different noodle at making from spaghetti, udon, ramen, and other pastas or noodles made from common wheat flours.

First, buckwheat's protein will never extract gluten that develops strong elasticity in the dough.

Instead of it, buckwheat has really rich water dissolvable protein in it.

This protein also works for developing elasticity in the soba dough, but its effect is far weaker than gluten's.

This is why we need to pay the closest attention to make soba.

Second, buckwheat noodle is soft and it will stretch with little force.

Indeed, when making buckwheat noodle you can give damages on the soba dough easily, and be going through breaking it.

Finally, this is the definite point of the difference to common wheat noodles.

Buckwheat flour doesn't require any rising time. So, when you finished making a soba dough, go ahead immediately to the next step.

Make sure, don't let the soba dough to rise for hours, and not to add any amount of salt. They are all the same reason.

Depending on this feature, the regular soba's making time is significantly shorter than common wheat noodles.

By a professional soba chef, it will take approximately 15 minutes for 1.5 kg flour to complete. In short, one serving at a minute.

Cold and hot, two types of soba

Either a cold or hot broth accompanies a portion of soba.

A "zaru basket" of cold soba is served with a cup of dipping sauce.

A "donburi bowl" of hot soba is served in the piping hot broth and usually with an attractive topping on it.

The cold dipping sauce has a stronger taste than the hot broth and is good enough to dip the noodles.

When the customer almost finishes to eat the soba, the soba restaurant staff brings a pot of soba-yu, what is the hot water in the boiling pot to cook the noodle with.

You can make the dipping sauce thinner with the soba-yu as your liking thickness to eat them all.

On the other hand, the hot broth has a sweet and mild taste. It's meant to be pleasing to the last drop without using soba-yu.

A bowl of hot soba usually comes with the special topping on it.

There are uncountable variations of attractive toppings in Japan. For example, tempura and ducks are the most popular ones for these.

What is the place of buckwheat's origin

Dr. Ohmi Ohnishi, who had been the professor of the Kyoto university until this March, discovered the exact place of buckwheat's origin through his many years research.

As the conclusion of his report, the place locates in the Tibet at which close to the China and Myanmar border.

Some researchers supposed that buckwheat came to Japan via the Korean peninsula by around BC 1000.

They also said making common wheat noodle techniques were brought by the priests from China through the ocean route in the 14th century.

One more thing, this is the actually amazing point that most of the Chinese never have soba noodles until today.

The fact leads the simple conclusion who developed the contemporary soba making technique.

Of course, that was Japanese.

The front most tips of making soba

To summarize, how to make fine soba, there are only three major steps needed to finish.

First, to mix flour and water. The aim of this step is to make a complete mixture within just a ten-second.

Next, to make a ball shape dough then make it completely flatten.

The final thickness of this process is 1.5 mm for regular soba.

Finally, fold the flattened dough and cut it with a special shaped soba knife at the every 1.3 mm width.

There are two big tips to make fine soba.

One is to move your hands swiftly.

The other is to complete the every process in the perfectly even.

About the Tsukiji Soba Academy

I'd like to explain about the Tsukiji Soba Academy. The Academy is a kind of cookery school to teach how to make handmade soba for the people who wants to start his or her own soba restaurant.

The academy was established in 2002 and produced enormously handmade soba professionals by today.

Our graduates are now open their restaurants not only in Japan, some of them are running their restaurants worldwide such as New York, Dallas, Bern, and more.

We specialize in teaching how to make handmade soba in the professional way for worldwide people, also specialize in consulting soba restaurants' management.

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