

# Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan

Issue No. 7 **Kozuyu** ◆ **Fukushima Prefecture** By CGJNYJC

*Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan* is a series introducing the history and food culture of various Japanese locales through their unique *kyodo-ryori* – timeless regional cuisines made with local ingredients and techniques.

The star of this issue is *kozuyu*, a hearty soup for special days. Let's have a look at its hometown in the Aizu region of Fukushima Prefecture!



## What is Kozuyu?

Traditionally served for New Year's and at marriage ceremonies, *kozuyu* is a must-have for auspicious occasions. A clear but full-bodied dashi broth envelopes a mountain of goodies such as dried scallops, *mamefu* (seitan), carrots, shiitake mushrooms, *kikurage* (wood ear mushrooms), *satoimo* taro, and konjac noodles. Originally a hospitality dish for guests in the Aizu region in the Edo period (1603–1868), it is made with an odd number of ingredients for good luck and served in stylish lacquer bowls called *Aizu-nuri*. Guests could (and surely did!) ask not only for seconds, but for as many as helpings as they wanted!



## Fukushima Prefecture

Fukushima sits in northeastern Japan with the Pacific Ocean at its east, and ranks third largest in land area among the 47 prefectures.

It is best known for Lake Inawashiro—the nation's 4th largest lake—and Mt. Bandai to its north. The two are surrounded by camp and ski sites and *onsen* hot springs for visitors to enjoy a nature-filled course.

The prefecture separates into 3 distinct regions: Aizu, Nakadōri, and Hamadōri. Each has their own unique climate and culture.



The Aizu region boasts historical destinations such as the Hideyo Noguchi Memorial Museum, which commemorates the nationally renowned bacteriologist seen on 1000-yen notes, as well as Wakamatsu Castle—also known as *Tsuruga-jo* or “swan castle”, and famously a battleground in the Boshin Civil War (1868–1869). Its castle town flourishes today as the “Samurai City” Aizuwakamatsu, the brand reflecting its legacy from feudal days.



## A Legacy of Loyalty

Following the unification of Japan under Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1603, the country was divided into territories called *han*, which were governed by resident *daimyō* lords appointed by the shogun. From among over 500 such domains, Aizu-*han* stands out in history with a tale of devotion.

A tactical stronghold with the Wakamatsu Castle, the lord of Aizu was naturally a staunch loyalist. Its last lord, Matsudaira Katamori served in the *Shinsengumi* that policed the political capital of Kyoto. In 1868 when the emperor's power was restored, he joined the former shogunate army and battled the imperial army in the Boshin War, purportedly in protest of their treatment of the last Tokugawa shogun.

Although his resistance ended in defeat, Matsudaira's unwavering loyalty is lauded as a true display of the samurai code, *bushido*. Commitment to these values is why the Aizu region retains its name today, long after the Meiji government put an end to the feudal system.





## Kozuyu

This recipe is by Chef Yasuhiro Shima of the CGJNY Ambassador's Residence.

### Ingredients

makes 2 servings

Dried scallops	30g
Shirataki (konjac noodles)	50g
Large carrot	2cm cut
Dried shiitake mushrooms	2
Satoimo (taro root)	100g
Kikurage (wood ear mushrooms)	10g
Ginkgo nuts	4
*Scallop broth	200ml
*Shiitake mushroom broth	100ml
*From step 1 in Instructions	
Kombu dashi	200ml
★Light soy sauce	2 tsp
★Cooking sake	2 tbsp
★Mirin	1 tbsp
★Salt	2 tsp
Mitsuba (Japanese parsley)	optional

### Instructions

1. Soak dried scallops in 200ml of water, and dried shiitake mushrooms in 100ml of water overnight.
2. Cut carrot into quarter-circle slices and parboil. Peel satoimo and parboil after cutting into bite-sizes. Set both aside.
3. Deshell and peel ginkgo nuts. Cut kikurage (rehydrate beforehand if using dried kikurage) into smaller pieces and cut shirataki into 3cm lengths. Set aside.
4. Combine rehydrated scallops with its broth, shiitake broth, and kombu dashi in a pot. Heat on medium.
5. Toss in all the prepped ingredients from previous steps and cook thoroughly. Add seasonings (★) to taste.
6. Serve in a bowl with mitsuba as garnish (optional).



### Traditional Cultures of Aizu

Many old traditions live on in the Aizu region today. Unique among them are the Akabeko, a toy in the image of a legendary plague-fighting red cow; the Okiagari-Koboshi (lit. "the priest who gets back up"), a doll viewed as a good-luck decoration due to its ability to always return to an upright position; and of course, the delicate lacquerware Aizu-nuri in which our featured dish is served.

The Aizu lacquer industry dates back to 1590, when a man named Gamō Ujisato became the lord of Aizu. He invited master craftsmen from other regions to come pass on their techniques—this successfully elevated Aizu lacquer craftsmanship to new heights, launching the industry to prominence. After continued development and success over subsequent generations, Aizu lacquerware has become a certified Traditional Craftwork of Japan. As this style of lacquerware continues to be refined, it also remains an unchanging part of Fukushima's food culture, adding an appetizing splash of color and delicate beauty to complement the palatable cuisine.



What did you think of kozuyu? Many of the ingredients in the recipe are dried due to the climate of this inland region, where winters are long and cold. Stay warm this winter with some piping hot bowls of kozuyu while remembering the samurai spirit!