

# Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan

Issue No. 10

*Echizen Oroshi Soba* ❁ **Fukui**

By CGJNYJIC

*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 10th issue features Fukui Prefecture's *Echizen oroshi soba*, together with the region's contributions to world history.

## What is Echizen oroshi soba?



Soba (buckwheat) noodles are a food staple in Japan, beloved for their clean taste, high nutritional value, and versatility. Amid countless variations and recipes, Fukui's *Echizen oroshi soba* stands out as a familiar classic with its signature combination of freshly grated daikon radish and chilled soba broth. Although the dish itself is said to be over 400 years old, its name is attributed to Emperor Showa, who spoke fondly of "the oroshi soba from Echizen (former name of the northern Fukui area)" after visiting Fukui in 1947. The simple, healthy ingredients come together in a gentle harmony of spice and umami that is especially refreshing on hot days!

Fukui Prefectural  
Dinosaur Museum



## Fukui Prefecture

Located along Japan's central coastline with the Sea of Japan, Fukui is best known for its catches of the prized "Echizen Gani", the most sought-after brand of snow crab in the country. In addition to crustaceans, the prefecture also has an affinity for dinosaurs, boasting the highest count of fossils excavated in the country as well as the Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum, one of the 3 top dinosaur museums in the world.

Of course, the soba isn't just a mere afterthought. In fact, Fukui recently won Grand Prize for "The 2020 Awards for Best Soba Producing Regions as Selected by Soba Appraisers", making it a top destination for soba lovers.



The secret to good soba is in the making of its flour. In Fukui, this is typically done by stone milling—a time consuming effort compared to using a mechanical flour mill. The absence of additional heat in a stone mill allows the flour to fully retain the buckwheat's original flavor and aroma, resulting in soba with a truly exquisite taste and texture. Be sure to have some on your next trip to Fukui!



## "Port of Humanity"

Fukui's key seaside position has allowed it to be both witness and stage to various historic events. Particularly of note is the story behind the Port of Tsuruga, which connected Japan and Europe throughout the Meiji period until the early Showa period. It was the sole point of entry into Japan for Polish orphans arriving from



Siberia following the Russian Revolution in the 1920s as well as for the Jewish refugees of World War II in the 1940s.

From 1939 to 1940, then Vice Consul of the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas (Lithuania), Sugihara Chiune, issued thousands of life-saving transit visas to displaced Jews. Refugees arriving at the Port of Tsuruga received a warm welcome from locals offering food along with bathhouse facilities. In 2008, Tsuruga City commemorated this chapter of its history by dedicating the "Port of Humanity Tsuruga Museum", which will serve to preserve these stories for many future generations.





## Echizen Oroshi Soba

This recipe is by Chef Shogo Tsutsumi of the CGJNY Ambassador's Residence.

### Ingredients

serves 1

### Instructions

Daikon radish	100g
Scallion	10g
Fresh soba noodles	120g
Katsuobushi (bonito flakes)	30g

### For soba broth:

Katsuo dashi (bonito stock)	200ml
Soy sauce	50ml
Mirin	50ml
Sugar	3g

1. Combine ingredients for soba broth in a pot and boil for several minutes. Set aside to cool.
2. Peel and grate daikon radish. Drain away moisture\* with a sieve, and set aside. Finely slice the scallion.  
\*The grated radish's spiciness can be reduced by gently "washing" it with water before draining—this is optional.
3. Combine grated daikon with the cooled soba broth.
4. Boil soba noodles in water. Remove from heat and rinse with cold water. Drain.
5. Plate the chilled soba noodles. Mix well with the daikon-infused soba broth.
6. Serve with bonito flakes and sliced scallion.



### Chef's Recommendation:

Level up the dish with add-ons like tempura and *nameko* mushrooms!



\*Echizen soba ideally uses noodles made with the area's special stone-milled buckwheat flour. Since this is hard to obtain overseas, we used commercial soba noodles from the supermarket.

## Soba in Culture

Alongside sushi, tempura, and udon, soba is now one of the most widely recognized Japanese foods in the global market. But few know of how intrinsic it is to not just the Japanese diet, but also to some of the country's most prominent cultural customs. For example, *toshikoshi soba* (lit. "year-crossing" soba) is a dish traditionally eaten on New Year's Eve. This is because the lengthy, thin noodles are said to symbolize longevity; another superstition goes that the meal helps to cut off impurities and bad luck from the passing year, in the same way that the delicate noodle strands easily break after cooking.

There is also a custom called *hikkoshi* ("moving") *soba*, where soba noodles are gifted to one's new neighbors after a move. This practice is believed to have begun in the Edo period, with the reasoning that soba noodles are generally a low-budget and well-liked item. The noodles' length is seen symbolically here too, signifying the gifter's wish to develop a lasting friendship with the recipient.

In this way, soba has come to mold a part of modern Japanese culture. These treasured traditions emerged because of Japan's unique love for the tasty noodles. Can you think of any similar food-related customs in your country?

