

# Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan

Issue No. 12

Hittsumi ❁ Iwate

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.

This issue features *Hittsumi*, or hand-pulled dumplings, from Iwate Prefecture.

## What is Hittsumi?



*Hittsumi* is hand-pulled (wheat) dough that is simmered into a hearty soup of various vegetables and meat. Its name is derived from the word *hittsumu*, which is the local way of saying, "to tear off by hand."

One of the coldest regions in Japan, Iwate's year-round climate discourages rice cultivation, leading to a local diet built around wheat-based dishes. Guaranteed to warm your bones on a cold winter's night, *hittsumi* is a culinary custom since old times. The soup can be made any number of ways, including with crab, a local delicacy for coast-side dwellers.

## Iwate Prefecture

Iwate is the one of the largest prefectures in Japan, second only to Hokkaido in size. Based in the Tohoku region, it captivates with its unique cultural history and scenes of natural beauty.

One of Iwate's top attractions is the Chuson-ji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the town of Hiraizumi. Within this complex is the dazzling Konjikido ("Golden Hall"), a hall fully covered in gold leaf and rumored to be the place described in "Zipangu, the Land of Gold" in *Travels of Marco Polo*.



Jodogahama



Along the coastline, visitors can enjoy striking views of the white beach Jodogahama ("Pure Land Beach"), the rugged cliffs of Kitayamazaki, and the

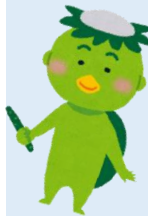
taste of fresh seafood caught off the Sanriku Coast—one of the world's foremost fishing grounds. One will also find the Sanriku Fukkō (reconstruction) National Park, which memorializes the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.



Iwate is also known for its traditional craft *nambu tekki* ("southern ironware"), which are sought after worldwide. Its iron kettles in particular are popular for producing hot water that both gives tea a mellow taste and supplements iron to the user's diet.

## Land of Literature

Iwate has long been the setting for many native literary classics.

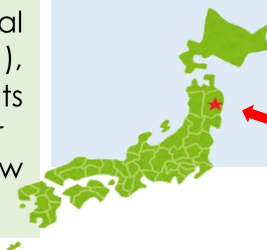


One notable example is Kunio Yanagita's *Tono Monogatari*, a collection of tales based on ancient folklore from the Tono area—youkai apparitions such as *kappa* (a scary river creature) and *zashiki warashi* (a child-like house spirit of fortune). Present-day Tono remains well-known as the "City of Folktales," where locals proudly continue the traditional art of folk storytelling.



Another location of note is Hanamaki, hometown of Meiji era novelist and poet Kenji Miyazawa, whose imaginative works have won over fans worldwide. His signature dreamland "Ihatov", an inspiration to many, is said to be based on Iwate.

There are many places to enjoy *hittsumi* in Tono and Hanamaki. Try having some while touring this locale so rich with literary history!



Iwate is here!



## Hittsumi

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

### Ingredients

serves 4

### Instructions

#### For Hittsumi

Cake Flour 200g  
Hot water (40°C) 80ml  
Pinch of salt

Chicken thigh meat 100g  
Carrot 50g  
Leek 60g  
Shiitake mushroom 3 pieces  
Abura-age (Fried tofu skin) 1 piece

#### Seasonings

Katsuo dashi (broth) 900ml  
Soy sauce (regular) 30ml  
Cooking sake 30ml  
Mirin 15ml  
Salt 3g



1. Combine ingredients for hittsumi in a ziplock bag. Seal the bag and knead the mixture until it reaches a texture similar to an earlobe. Let rest for 30 minutes.
2. Cut carrot into half-moon slices. Slice leek diagonally, and thinly slice shiitake mushrooms after removing the stumps. Remove excess oil from abura-age by rinsing with hot water, then drain and cut into 1cm-wide strips.
3. Cut chicken into bite-size chunks. Blanch and remove excess fat from the meat.
4. In a nabe pot, combine katsuo dashi, prepped chicken, carrot, shiitake, and abura-age. Set heat on medium high.
5. Add remainder of seasonings once carrots soften.
6. When soup is back at a rolling boil, begin adding the hittsumi dough, pulling off one bite-size bit at a time.
7. Once hittsumi float, add leek and let simmer for 2-3 more minutes.
8. Serve with garnishes such as scallions or mitsuba.

Try making it with any leftover meats and vegetables!

Watch Chef Tsutsumi's demonstration on our channel!

[youtube.com/user/CGJNYchannel](https://www.youtube.com/user/CGJNYchannel)



## Wheat from Iwate Saves the World!

A look at the lineup of local dishes around the Tohoku region—hittsumi, *nambu senbei*, etc.—reveals that wheat is a staple for not only Iwate, but also greater Tohoku. How did this come to be in a rice consuming nation?

Unlike much of Japan, Tohoku's local climate is unfavorable for most crops. Cold easterly winds called *yamase* blow in from the Pacific and bring a chill to each summer. In the face of repeated famines, the region soon turned to cultivating wheat.

Wheat saved the people of Tohoku, and in 1935, an agronomist in Iwate, Gonjiro Inazuka, developed a variety of wheat which would help save millions worldwide. Named "Norin 10", his seeds contained dwarfing genes which reduced crop height and gave higher resilience against lodging and the elements. Norin 10 was subsequently used by American scientist Norman Borlaug to breed a variety which drastically increased wheat yield around the world. The success was such that Borlaug received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for improving the world's food supply—and the wheat of Tohoku is credited for having saved the world from hunger!

