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A Taste of Japan



The 3 'R's to good eating –
Restaurants,
Reviews & Recipes

12-page pullout



File photo



Let's talk tempura

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

If you think tempura is just another fried food – think again. This quintessential Japanese cuisine dates back to the Edo Period (1603-1867) and is perhaps second only to sushi as Japan's culinary contribution to the world.

Simple yet elegant, tempura is

ubiquitous in various forms throughout Japan. Tasty tidbits of lightly batter-fried vegies and seafood adorn almost every bento box and are found in virtually every grocery store for a mere 60-100 yen (\$0.60-\$0.85) each. It's a mainstay with noodles, and the essential snack food of Okinawa.

No Japanese restaurant is complete without some tempura on the menu and many do well specializing in it. A typical tempura restaurant usually has a counter where cooks prepare and then immediately serve tempura.

While a good bowl of

Okinawa style ...

tempura-topped rice goes for a reasonable 600-1,000 yen at most chain tempura-ya, or tempura shops, their high-end counterparts draw connoisseurs willing dish out up to 20,000 yen for a multicourse meal featuring the dish.

"Tempura is the ideal food," says Akira Akashi of Ten-ichi tempura house in Sasebo. The traditional frying technique, he adds, preserves the flavor and texture of the food.

"Tempura is a really wonderful dish because the food is not cooked directly by the hot oil, but by steam under the batter," Akashi says. "This preserves the delicate nuances of the food. In fact, it is often considered a steamed dish."

So what is the ideal food to turn into tempura? What isn't?

Common ingredients include shrimp, squid, fish, green bell pepper, eggplant, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, mushroom, lotus root, bamboo shoots, carrot, burdock, green beans, okra and onion. But, that's not all.

There are seasonal and regional favorites such as oysters in the winter and, depending where you are,

chicken, pork and other meats. Even Spam, that Okinawan favorite, is commonly used down south where there is a slightly different twist on tempura.

Tempura is very popular on Okinawa, just like in the mainland. But it has a slightly different look and taste. While mainlanders cook tempura in thin plain batter for maximum crisp, Okinawans prefer a



Photos courtesy of Nakamoto Tenpuraten



Mainland Japan style ...



Photos courtesy of Tan-nen

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



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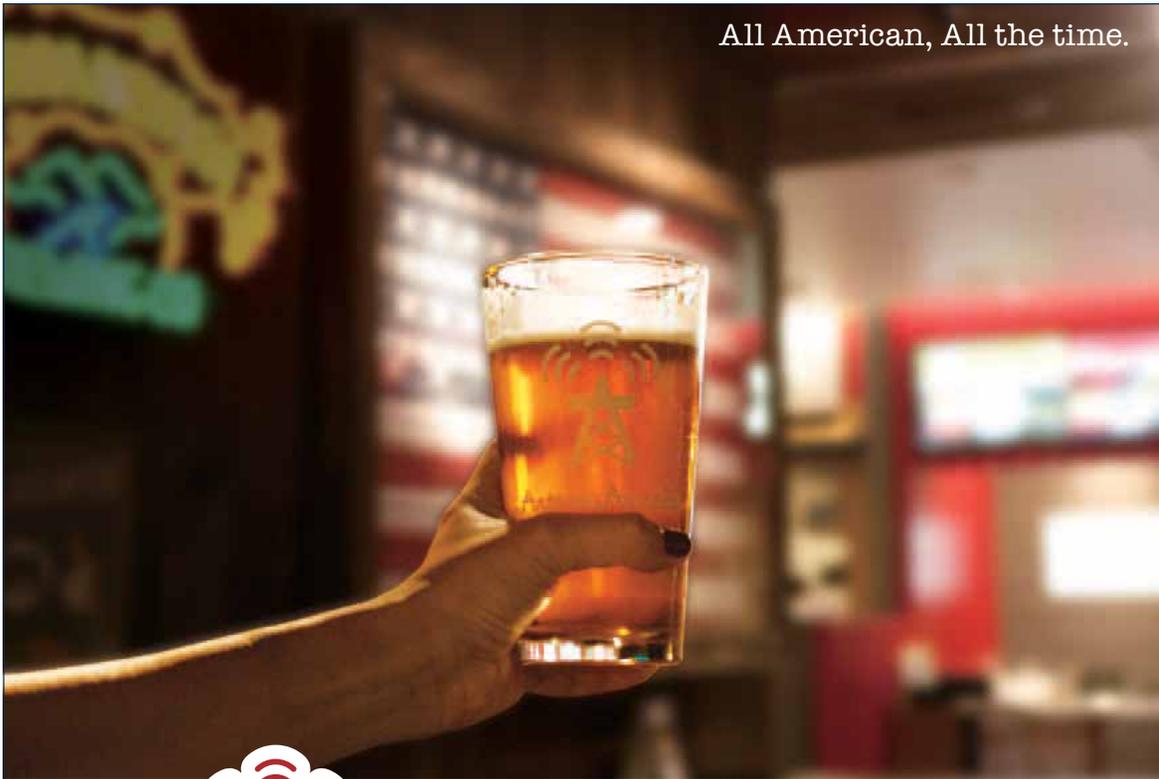
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RESTAURANT INFO

Take on your own tempura

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Tempura used to be a dish that required great skill and experience. However, since the birth of tempura powder – mix of flour, starch, rice flour and baking powder – anyone can fry up a batch tempura from the comfort of their own kitchen.

With the powder and a few simple tips, it's not so hard to make delicious tempura at home. Various specially formulated tempura powders are available at any supermarket or grocery shop. You can cook tempura using any of your favorite ingredients.

When making the batter, make sure to mix the tempura powder with water with a little ice, and don't mix it too much. You can also chill the bowl of batter by placing it in a larger bowl with ice in it. The batter is traditionally mixed in small batches using chopsticks for only a few seconds.

Be careful. Over mixing the batter and warm temperature will cause the flour mixture to become chewy and dough-like when cooked.

When cooking shellfish, squid, or hard-skinned watery vegetables, such as bell pepper or eggplant, the skin is usually scored with a knife to prevent the ingredients from bursting during deep frying.

Coat the thin slices of your favorite



The batter File photo

favorite vegetables or seafood with the batter, then deep fry in a hot oil.

The oil is an important factor of tempura, and helps determine the flavor and smell. Vegetable and canola oils are often used for cooking tempura at home, although sesame oil is traditionally used at many specialty restaurants. Try different types of oils that suit your tastes.

In general, the oil temperature should be 320 – 356 Fahrenheit. You can check the temperature with a drop of batter in the oil. The batter should sink then rise to float on the surface of the oil. If it sinks and does not surface, the oil is not hot enough; if it does not sink at all, the oil is too hot.

Scoop out the bits of tempura with a small mesh scoop. After cooking, let the tempura drain off excess oil on a steel rack.

Here are a few other guidelines:

- Prepare large, deep pan with plenty of oil. Tempura should be fried in oil that is at least about two inches deep.
- Wipe the ingredients to be fried well with a paper towel after you wash them.
 - Use cold/iced water for the batter – this helps prevent it from absorbing too much oil.
 - Make the batter right before frying tempura. Don't use too much batter to coat the ingredients.
 - If you will fry both seafood and vegetables, fry the vegetables first.

takiguchi.takahiro
@stripes.com

Tips for perfection

There are three important factors in frying good tempura – oil temperature, the constancy and quality of the batter and timing, according to Ten-ichi tempura house's Akira Akashi in Sasebo

Timing is also important when it comes to removing tempura from the frying pan.

"Deep frying dehydrates," Akashi said. "The sizzling sound comes from the water evaporating from batter. Listen for the tone of the sizzling, when it changes tempura has yellowed that are cooked to the perfect crisp and tastiness."

When it comes to that tastiness, tasting tempura is also subject to good timing, according to Akashi. He says that former Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, a tempura enthusiast, is known to have once said, "You must eat tempura with (determination and ferocity) as if you were fighting your parent's enemy."

"He was right," Akashi said. "The best time to eat tempura is when it is hot and crispy – as soon as it has cooked. That is how to really appreciate the dish."

- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan

The temperature

"In order to cook good tempura you have to keep the oil temperature stable," he says. "When you are frying, the oil temperature rises so you need to monitor and maintain it at a stable degrees."

"I usually set at 190 degrees Celsius (374 Fahrenheit), a little higher than the standard in order to make the tempura lighter and crispier," Akashi says. "The time needed for frying vegetables, shrimp or fish are vary depending on what kind they are, but oil temperature for them can be the same."

Cooking times range between a few seconds for delicate leaf vegetables, to several minutes for thick items or large "kakiage," or vegetable and shrimp fritter.

However, not all the expert agree on oil temperature. Tokio Nakamoto of Okinawa's Nakamoto Tempuraten insists on adjusting the temperature according to the ingredients being cooked.

"Seaweed definitely needs high temperature while potatoes fry better at rather lower temperature," she explains. "The most important thing about cooking tempura is adjusting the oil temperature."

The batter

Akashi says using iced water is key to good tempura batter. He says he beats eggs into it first then mixes in the flour last.

The timing

As for the timing, he says the faster ingredients are coated in the cold batter and added to the fryer, the better the tempura will be.

"You have to do it all at once within a second," Akashi says. "If you dip in the batter too much, or take too much time, the tempura would never come up crisp and beautiful."



Tempura powder
File photo



Tentsuyu

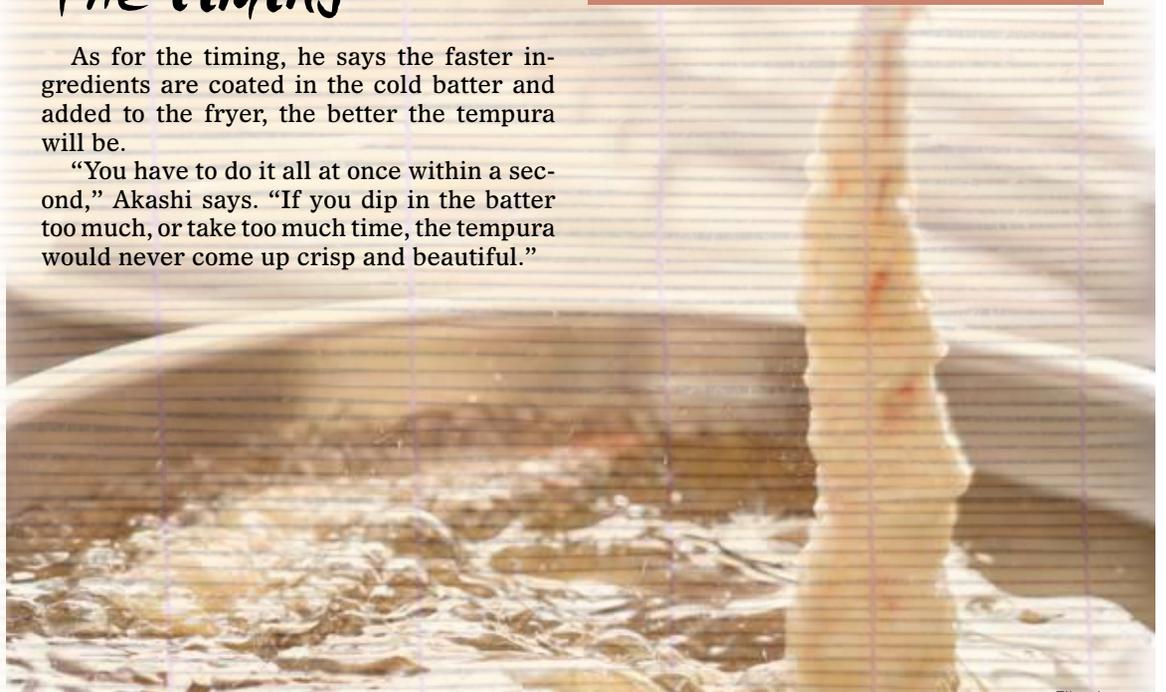
(Tempura Dipping Sauce)

- 1 tablespoon dashi no moto (dried fish soup stock)
- 1 cup of water
- 2 tablespoons mirin (sweet rice cooking wine), or 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons sake or dry white wine
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- ginger root to taste, freshly grated

Boil the dashi in the water for about 2-3 minutes, then remove from heat and stir in the remaining ingredients.



File photo



File photo

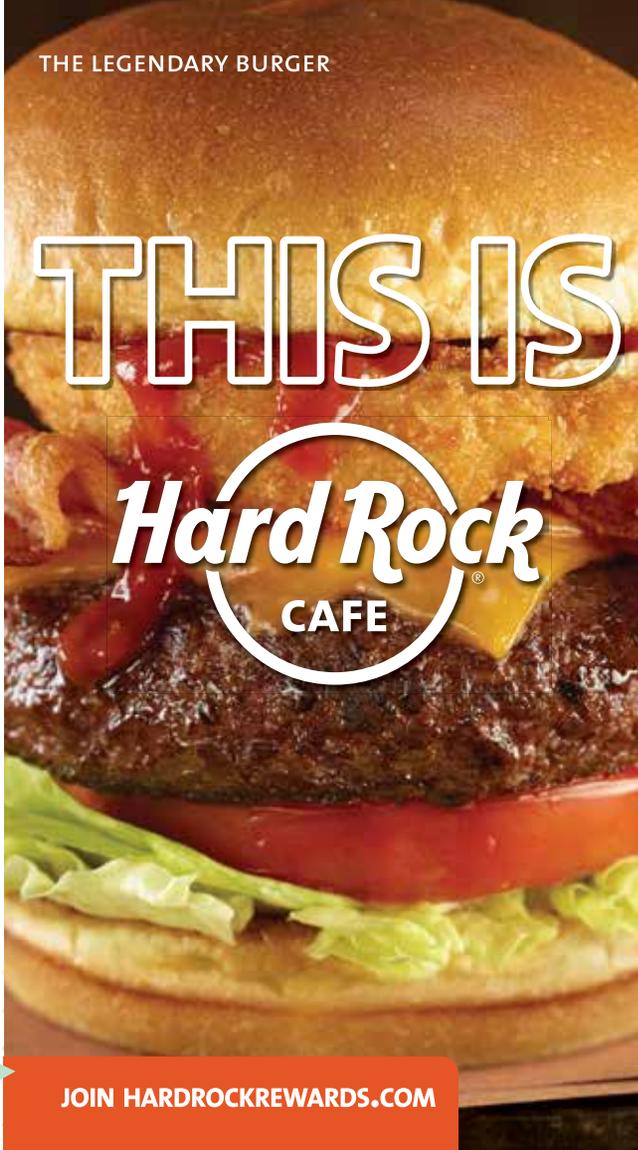


It tastes as good as it sounds



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RESTAURANT INFO



A "tenmori" combo plate File photo

TEMPURA: It's more than mere fried food

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

richer thicker seasoned batter for maximum flavor.

"Selling for a mere 60 yen (\$0.50) a piece, on Okinawa tempura is considered more of a snack, like "takoyaki" (breaded fried octopus) or "nikuman" (meat buns)" says Kyoko Hirata of Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau. "It is usually made a little flatter here with well-seasoned yellow batter made with lots of eggs."

"Fish tempura – both tuna and white fish – squid, red potato, as well as

seaweed and sausage are popular ingredients," she adds.

For the most part, Hirata says, tempura is typically sold at fish and candy stores on Okinawa. However, tempura restaurants that serve fare like those in mainland Japan can also be found in larger Okinawan cities.

While Okinawan-style tempura can be easily enjoyed without a condiment, its mainland counterpart is almost always eaten with a special dipping sauce, salt or citrus juice.

The most common dipping sauce for this kind of tempura is "tentsuyu," a thin sauce made from soy sauce, sweet sake

and stock. However, straight soy sauce has also been used as a dipping sauce since Edo Era when tempura originated as an inexpensive food for commoners.

So whether you are looking for a quick snack or an elaborate traditional meal, check out the nearest tempura-ya outside the gates. It's a great way to get a true Land of the Rising Sun.

"The simple and quick process makes the flavor of anything that's cooked really stand out



Tempura at an Okinawan s

OKINAWA

Nakamoto Tempuraten

Nakamoto Tempuraten is one of the most popular tempura shops on Okinawa.

Since the shop is running its own fish shop and cultivating seaweed, fresh fish and seaweed are always available for tempura.

"We use only local fresh fish for our tempura," says owner Tokie Nakamoto. "So, our ingredients for tempura change every day in accordance with the daily catch. It may be tuna some days, and swordfish or marlin on another day."

All tempura menu items with fish, squid, vegetables and seaweed are for 65 yen (\$0.55). "Mozuku" and "aosa" (types of seaweed) tempura are the most popular at this shop.

You can eat their tempura without any dipping sauce because the batter is seasoned, according to Nakamoto.

The shop is located on Oujima Island which you can access by bridge. They also offer tempura to go.

"Since our shop is facing a beautiful beach, groups of people often come and buy tempura here and enjoy it on the beach," Nakamoto said.

Location: 9 Okutake, Tamagusuku, Nanjo City
Open April - October 10 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. (Nov - Mar, - 6 p.m.)
URL: nakamotosengyoten.com/
For more information, call 098-948-3583



Photos courtesy of Nakamoto Tempuraten

Uema Bento Tempuraten

Fish and shrimp tempura are the most popular at Uema. "We use whiptail for fish tempura because it has a unique texture and it goes well with tempura," says owner Yoshikazu Uema. "We use tuna, since the meat can be too hard for tempura."

According to Uema, texture of his tempura is "soft," or breaded octopus treats, in the mainland.

"With thicker and tasty batter, you can eat it with a dipping sauce, but you may want to use sauce like mayonnaise or ketchup, too," he said.

"Our tempura may be a little tough to mainlanders. But it has a unique crispy yet puffy texture that I am sure everyone would enjoy."

The shop is located near Kadena Air Base and Camp Courtney, so you can drop by on the way home.

You can order 100 or more tempura for any occasion. "Call us 30 minutes or an hour before you arrive, and your tempura will be ready to pick up within 30 minutes (may take longer on weekends)," Uema said.

This shop also offers home delivery, and you can

Location: 3-23-20 Noborikawa, Okinawa City
Open 5 a.m.- 8 p.m.
URL: uemabento.com/
For more information, call 098-937-9477



File photo



Photo courtesy of Uema Bento Tempuraten



Photo courtesy of Tan-nen

the taste of the cooking pro- ingredient,” says Izumi Saka- moto of Tan-nen res- taurant in Hachinohe. “That is the great charm of tempura.” takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

at this shop. s white soft meat and Uema. “We don’t use compares to “ta- and. without mayon- and- hat- mp y party re you visit hen you arrive a eat there as well.



Photos courtesy of Uema Bento Tempuraten

MAINLAND JAPAN

Tan-nen Hachinohe, near Misawa AB

Located in the center of busy streets of Hachinohe City, you can enjoy traditional tastes of tempura in a cozy and relaxing atmosphere at Tannen.

Its counter seats enables you to appreciate newly fried tempura in hot while observing cook’s skilled work. “The best way of enjoy tempura is eat one in hot after another,” says Izumi Sakamoto of Tan-nen.

Besides prawn, sweet potato, asparagus, lotus roots and other popular seasonal tempuras, the restaurant offers its own unique sea urchin and chicken tempuras.

The restaurant prepared a couple of different salts of Ishikawa and Hiroshima prefectures for highlighting each ingredient, both vegetables and seafood.

“Through trial and errors, we have established our own style for cooking tempura with crispy batter along with tasty ingredients,” Sakamoto said. “So, any customer will enjoy our tempura.”



Photo courtesy of Tan-nen

Location: Kongo Building 1F, 18 Takajo-koji, Hachinohe City
Open Mon - Sat, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., 5 - 10 p.m.
URL: kongou-group.com/%e5%ba%97%e8%88%97%e6%83%85%e5%a0%b1/%e4%b8%b9%e5%b9%b5/
For more information, call 0178-45-2812

Hakata Tempura Naguya Atsugi, near NAF Atsugi

Although this restaurant is located near NAF Atsugi of the Kanto Plains, it serves tempura in the Hakata way, as the name indicates.

Chicken and pork loin tempura are served with free homemade garnish, such as salted and fermented squid, pickles and fried leaf.

The most popular menu item is the Hakata Set which contains tempuras of shrimp, whiting, squid, pork loin and three seasonal vegetables.

“Although we have a fixed set menu, we serve each tempura right after it is cooked,” says Norimitsu Nagura, owner of the shop.

“Although restaurants usually use sesame oil in their tempura in the Kanto region, sometimes it can be too heavy. We use canola oil so people can eat it every day,” Nagura said.

To highlight the flavor of ingredients, they always try to make the batter coating as thin as possible, according to Nagura.

“We pay special attention to the oil temperature and timing,” Nagura said.

Garnishes are prepared fresh every day.

This restaurant is popular with day workers and families, alike.



Photos courtesy of Hakata Tempura Naguya

Location: 3-2-1 Tsumada Higashi, Atsugi City
Open 11 a.m. - 10 p.m.
URL: <http://naguya.com>
For more information, call 046-225-7979

Ten-ichi Sasebo, near Sasebo Naval Base

Founded 60 years ago, Ten-ichi is known as one of the oldest tempura restaurants in Sasebo.

This tiny shop can accommodate only 10 people at the counter at one time.

“In this tiny space, I feel I can manage everything myself, and it helps to me concentrate on cooking,” says Akira Akashi, owner of Ten-ichi.

Its popular tempura set for 1,500 yen (\$13) contains shrimp, cod, squid and three vegetables, along with red miso soup, pickles, a vinegared dish and rice.

“I visit markets every day to select the best seafood and vegetables in season,” Akashi said. “So, the menu at my restaurant is different every day depending on the season.”

In the middle of winter, they are currently serving oyster tempura. Throughout the wintertime, a special tempura set with oysters is available for 2,500 yen (\$22).

It contains three oysters, one squid, two shrimp and three vegetables. The restaurant has a contract with a local farm, which enables it to get fresh oysters.

English menus with pictures are available at this shop.



Photos courtesy of Ten-ichi

Location: 7-14 Kamigyo machi, Sasebo City
Open Fri-Wed, 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., 5 - 9 p.m.
(Thu, 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.)
URL: tabelog.com/nagasaki/A4202/A420201/42003600/
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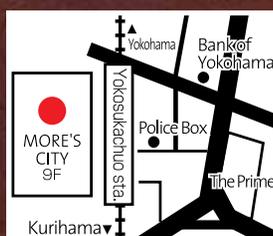
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- Shinagawa Takanawa Tel. 03-5798-3501
- Shinagawa Konan Tel. 03-6718-2761
- Ikebukuro Tel. 03-5928-1391
- Ebina Tel. 046-292-4286
- Makuhari Tel. 043-213-3256
- Maihama Tel. 047-700-9031



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RESTAURANT INFO



A little story about Jack & Betty hotdogs

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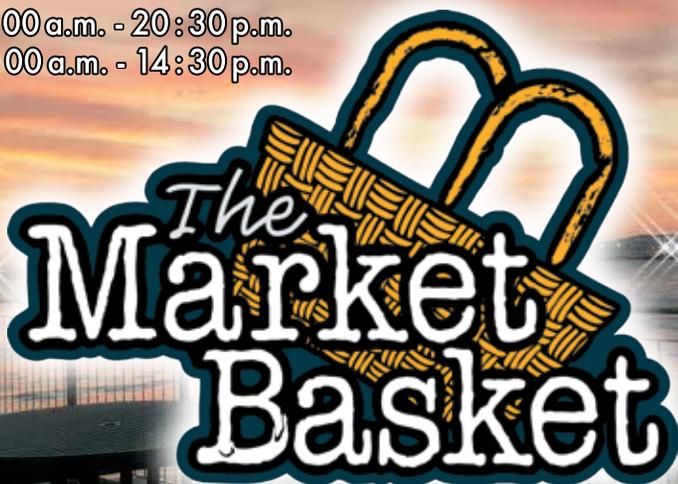
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Map labels: Misawa Air Base Main Gate, Police Station, Misawa AirPort, Civic Center, Misawa City Office, Misawa Station.

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RESTAURANT INFO

Replica food



STORY AND PHOTOS BY
REY WATERS,
JAPAN TRAVEL

While on your visit to Japan you will come across many restaurants that present food samples of their offerings. The plastic food looks so real and the details make your mouth water. Go to the top floor of any department store and almost all the restaurants will showcase realistic looking dishes. Many times when dining alone I show the waitress my choice by pointing to the display in the window.

Back in the Showa period a man

named Takizo Iwasaki decided to form a company to make replica food. In 1932 he opened a factory in Osaka and it became the largest food display company in Japan. Originally the sample food was made of wax, but after sitting in the display case for a long period of time during the hot weather their shape changed, so in the 1970's they switched to a durable plastic.

Miwa and I recently booked a class at Iwasaki's "Ganso Shokuhin Sample-ya" company in Tokyo, which holds workshops for making replica food. Today it was Lettuce and Tempura. I chose shrimp and potato for the tempura.

Toyama-san, our instructor, explained to me in English the

process we would experience during our class. She also noted that many foreigners join her workshops.

The first and most important step is to heat the water to 42 degrees Celsius (107.6 F). Today we used three colors to make our samples of green, white, and light yellow.

There were a total of 7 students, so the class moved along pretty quickly.

To make the Tempura pieces you need to hold a cup with the liquid 60 cm high and pour slowly into the vat. For shrimp, pour in a rectangular shape and for the potato pour in a circle. Place the shrimp onto the rectangle and slowly submerge in the water while wrapping the ends. When complete, place in cold water and there you have Shrimp Tempura. It does look real, even the one I made.

The lettuce process was a little

more complicated using two colors, however the results were the same. We chose to have ours cut in half showing the realistic inner texture.

Ganso offers several other choices of sample food making at their two Kappabashi locations.

The class was very inexpensive when you consider what the cost would be to purchase the three items we made. Our workshop cost 2160 yen (\$19). The prices vary according to the food you want to make.

I am by no means an artist, but this process will give you a feeling of accomplishment, and even children are welcome to take the class.

Downstairs from the workshop is a retail store where you can purchase items for your home or restaurant. They have two stores in Tokyo

and one at the Red Brick Warehouse in Yokohama.

During your visit to Japan this workshop is a nice way to spend a couple of hours while taking home a neat souvenir that you personally made.

For additional information go to their website, or call 0120-81-1839.

The workshops must be done in groups with a limit of 16 per class. Both workshop locations are just minutes walking distance from Tawaramachi Station or Asakusa Station in the Kappabashi-dori area of Tokyo.



Our colors for the workshop

Holding the cup 60cm high before pouring



Facts from the Fryer

Can you imagine frozen ice cream served up as piping hot tempura?

Deep-fried deepfreeze

Some of the more unusual tempura-prepared foods include "umeboshi," or pickled plums; "natto," or fermented soybeans, banana, mango and sushi.

Perhaps, however, the most unusual tempura of all is ice cream.

Although it is hard to believe you have "ice" cream deep fried in 350 degree oil, it is possible. The trick is to encase the ice cream in a pound cake-like shell or something similar with air pockets. The air in the cake prevents ice cream from melting in the heat until this unique tempura is cooked and ready to eat.

Needless to say, it should be eaten as soon as it is done cooking.

All fried foods are NOT equal

You may have noticed that in addition to tempura there are also popular deep-fried foods in Japan that are usually coated with panko breadcrumbs. But make no mistake – as tasty as these foods may be, they are not tempura.

What sets them apart? It's simple – the breading.

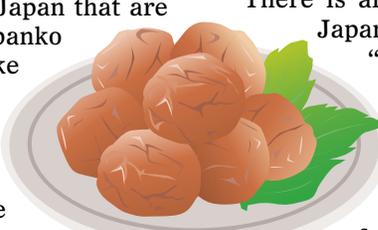
In Japan, fried vegetables and seafood with breadcrumbs are

called "furai" (fry), such as "ebi" (shrimp) furai or "aji" (fish) furai, or "kaki" (oyster) furai.

Breaded meats and similar foods, on the other hand, are called "katsu" (cutlet) such as "ton-katsu" (pork cutlet) or bifu-katsu (beef cutlet).

They are considered to be completely different from tempura. Both furai and katsu are seasoned first, then flour, egg and breadcrumbs are applied before they are deep fried.

There is also another popular Japanese fried dish, called "karaage." This is usually, chicken pieces, shrimp or octopus that is seasoned then coated with rice flour or starch before being fried.



- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Speculation on the origins of tempura

The recipe for tempura was introduced to Japan by Portuguese Jesuit missionaries particularly active in the city of Nagasaki also founded by the Portuguese, during the sixteenth century (1549).

Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder and first shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate of Japan, reportedly loved tempura. Originally, tempura was a popular food eaten at street vendors called yatai since the Genroku era.

The word "tempura," or the technique of dipping fish and vegetables into a batter and frying them, comes from the word "tempora," a Latin word meaning "times," or "time period" used by both Spanish and Portuguese missionaries to refer to the Lenten period or Ember Days (ad tempora quadragesimae), Fridays, and other Christian holy days.

Ember Days or quattuor tempora refer to holy days when Catholics avoid red meat and instead eat fish or vegetables. The idea that the word "tempura" may have been derived from the Portuguese noun tempero, meaning a condiment or seasoning of any kind, or from the verb temperar, meaning "to season" has not been substantiated. However, the Japanese language could easily have



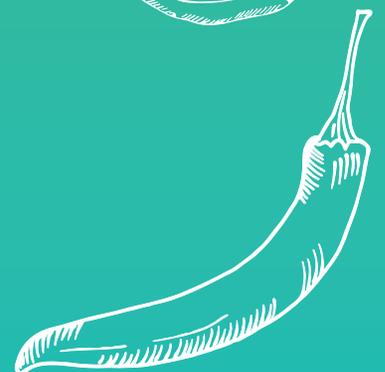
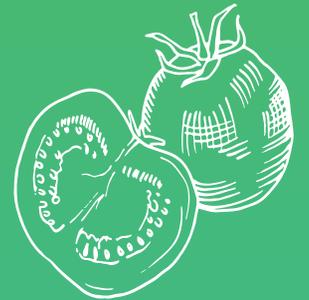
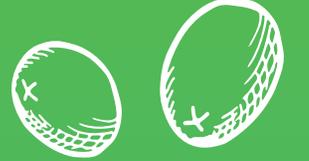
assumed the word "tempero" as is, without changing any vowels as the Portuguese pronunciation in this case is similar to the Japanese.

There is still today a dish in Portugal very similar to tempura called peixinhos da horta, "garden fishies," which consists in green beans dipped in a batter and fried. The end result is usually chewier than tempura.

It is also possible that the Portuguese picked the technique up from Goa which was their colony in India and this could very well be a variation of the pakora.

The term "tempura" is thought to have gained popularity in southern Japan; it became widely used to refer to any sort of food prepared using hot oil, including some already existing Japanese foods. Today, the word "tempura" is also commonly used to refer to satsuma age, a fried fish cake which is made without batter.

- Source: Wikipedia



PIZZA HUT LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1030-2100

DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE

Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and drinks

Atsugi 1030-2100

DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE

Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and drinks



LIVE MÁS

TACO BELL LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1000-2100

DRIVE-UP WINDOW AVAILABLE

Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items

Atsugi 1000-2000

Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items

Sasebo 1030-2100

Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items