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8-page pullout





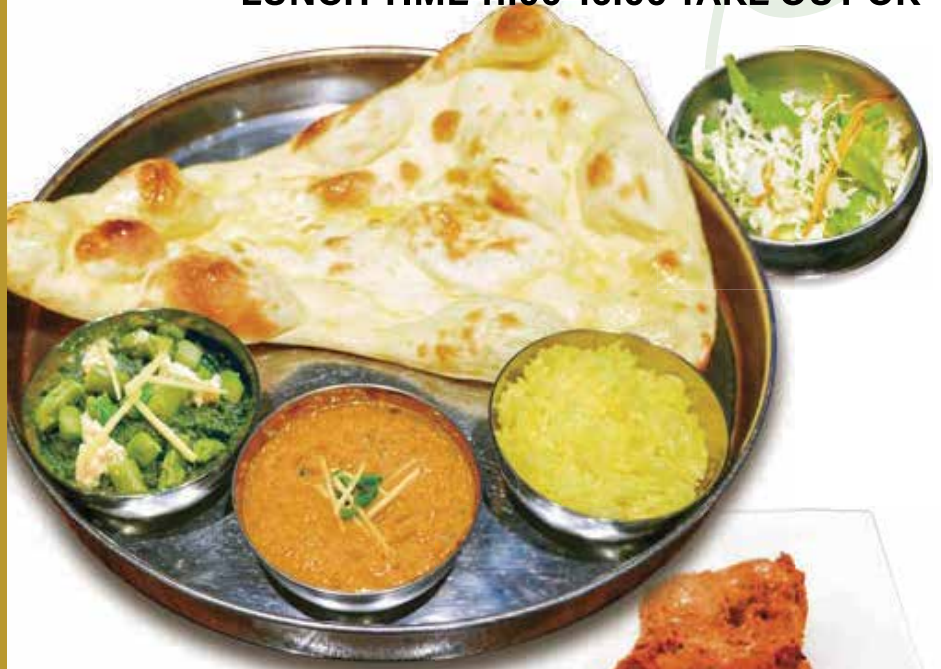
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A Taste of Japan



TOKYO

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TOKYO

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RESTAURANT INFO



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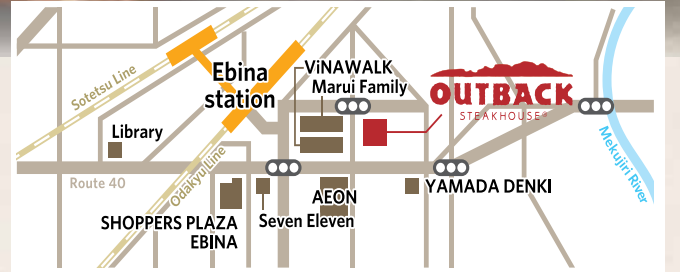
Outback Steakhouse starts fresh every day to create the flavors that our mates crave most. Our signature steaks are seasoned, hand-carved to order and grilled to perfection. Our specialty is Slow-Roasted Prime Rib offered during weekend dinnertime. But there's so much more to enjoy, including our famous Blooming Onions. So, come and enjoy our authentic American food and let us make you feel at home. Or, get your food to go and enjoy it relaxing at home. Even easier, order through Uber Eats, with delivery available from our Shinagawa Takanawa and Shibuya Ikebukuro locations.



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www.outbacksteakhouse.co.jp/en

RESTAURANT INFO

A Taste of Japan

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Open 10:00-
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RESTAURANT INFO

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SYDNEY SEEKFORD,
BYFOOD



Most people would agree that if you haven't tried tonkatsu, you're missing a big part of Japanese food. It can be found on just about every menu at home and abroad, alongside staples like ramen (hint hint). But just what is tonkatsu? Where did it come from? And more importantly, have you ever ordered it, expecting to get a crunchy, juicy plate of fried meat and been met with a table of soup instead!?

Keep reading. All secrets will be revealed.

What is tonkatsu?

Tonkatsu is best explained etymologically. That's to say, looking at the word itself since it is basically just a description. Like calling ketchup tomato paste, for example. The "ton" in tonkatsu is simply a reading for the kanji 豚, meaning pork. The katsu part is a little more complicated and gets really complicated later, but stay with me.

To katakana-ize the English word "cutlet," we get カツレツ "katsuretsu". Pull out the first part, 'katsu', and top it off with the pork 'ton', and you get 'tonkatsu'.

From here, you can probably figure out that tonkatsu is a pork cutlet.

Specifically, it's a pork cutlet that has been rolled in breadcrumbs and egg and double-fried for that extra-crispy, like-no-other texture. Abroad, the dish has taken on many forms and is occasionally double-named pork tonkatsu, but technically tonkatsu only refers to katsu-style fried pork to begin with.

You might be a little surprised to learn that the katsu part of tonkatsu comes from English, but its culinary origins are even more interesting than that!



Photo by Kai keisuke, Shutterstock

The history of Tonkatsu

The first iteration of tonkatsu was served in Tokyo's glamorous Ginza district in the 1890s under the simple moniker "pork cutlet." According to the Nihombashi Restaurant Association (whose authority, I believe, personally,) this took the form of a thin slice of pork served aside raw cabbage due to a lack of personnel and funds. It wasn't until 1929 that today's melt-in-your-mouth juicy, thick tonkatsu was born in a competitor's kitchen in Chiyoda, a few train stops away.

Clearly, tonkatsu came out of Japan, which doesn't explain the foreign name. In fact, plenty of Japanese apparently even debate the classification of tonkatsu as yoshoku (western-inspired Japanese food), because it is so entrenched in the country's food culture. Thankfully, there's an explanation for this as well.

About a quarter century before the first tonkatsu ever graced a heap o' cabbage, the Meiji restoration established policies to popularize Western culture. Along with this came cuisine, such as the French cotelette de veau. Without Europe's long history of incorporating rich animal products in their diet, the buttery, pan-fried veal of this French dish proved not only expensive but unsuited to Japanese tastes. Fortunately, the Japanese had developed the deep-frying technique of tempura, which wicks off excess oil on the second dip. In this way, Tonkatsu uses the original flour-egg-breadcrumb breading technique of French cuisine but Japanese frying methods to achieve its unique texture. Sounds perfect for something that came out of Ginza, right? Add to that readily available cabbage, a characteristic tonkatsu sauce with its own history, and you get the beloved tonkatsu of our time.

All about Tonkats the Japanese crispy pork

Tonkatsu vs. tonkotsu

At the start of this article, I asked if you have ever been unfortunate enough to witness this scene: Eagerly, you eye waitstaff coming around the corner, tonkatsu hopefully in tow. Then, in horror and surprise, that same waitstaff places before you or your dining companion a steaming bowl of soup instead of the requested hunk of meat.

The graphic scene I paint here is one that can only be born of experience. And shame.

On my first trip to Tokyo, I had the misfortune of ordering tonkotsu instead of my desired 'tonkatsu' thanks to a little language slip. Briefly, let's return to that etymology issue to explain.

We know that ton is pork. So obviously, I had ordered pork something. The kicker is that kotsu-katsu delineation. With a single letter, the whole menu changes.

Katsu, as we have learned, comes from cutlet. Kotsu on the other hand comes from Japanese originally, and means bone. What I had requested (and you may have too, had I not saved you from this) was 'pork bone', which naturally conveys a desire for pork bone soup, a common base for ramen and readily available at most Japanese restaurants alongside its fried, hammy companion.

In brief, tonkatsu is a fried pork cutlet dish. Tonkotsu is the name for the rich pork-bone broth used in ramen. Sound similar, very different. Should one order tonkatsu ramen outside of Japan, however, you will probably get tonkotsu soup and not noodles topped with pork cutlet, though that would probably be great.



Variations of 'ton'katsu

Aside from the original tonkatsu combination of pork cutlet, cabbage, and sauce on a plate, other delicious takes on tonkatsu have been born of novelty and necessity.

Katsudon

Katsudon is a tonkatsu recipe that swaps out the crunch of cabbage and zing of vinegary katsu sauce for an easy-to-eat meal even young children feel at home with. Fried pork cutlet gets simmered with sweetened egg, onion, and sauce, then served over rice. It's a one-bowl meal popular across the world and brings together some of Japan's best cooking techniques.



Katsu Curry

Apparently, the product of a customer's whims, katsu curry is now a staple in katsu and curry restaurants alike. Slightly spicy, thick Japanese curry meets the crunchy savoriness of tonkatsu in a perfect harmony of texture and flavors.



Photo by Katie Thompson, byFood

Katsu Sando

Some genius came up with the perfect way to enjoy the classic katsu combination of katsu sauce, shredded cabbage and pork cutlet on the go. Pillowy shokupan style Japanese white bread soaks up the sauce to prevent drips and softens the prickly crunch of katsu panko. Served hot or cold, katsu sando are a delicious, discrete riff on tonkatsu.





File photo

u,
cutlet

Types of 'but it's not really ton' katsu

Now that tonkatsu has become an international catchall word for katsu-style fried foods, let's look at a few other members of the katsu-family you may come across in Japan or abroad.

Other Meats: Chicken, steak and tuna "rare" katsu

For the many reasons one might abstain from pork, there is torikatsu. It's what you'll be getting if you order chicken tonkatsu or chicken katsu overseas. I like to think of it as a katsu that was adapted for western tastes back again....

On the other hand, recently popularized rare katsu takes inspiration from searing to flash fry high-quality tuna or steak in a katsu-style panko breading. The mouthfeel retains the juicy quality and envelopes the rare morsels in crunchy katsu-style goodness. It's the opposite of the humble katsudon and elevates katsu to the luxury dining sphere with wagyu and maguro. Are you drooling yet?



Photo by Eliska Sikulova, byFood



Kushikatsu

Katsu on a stick! Shove a yakitori stick through just about any bite-sized piece of food, fry it katsu-style, and you get kushikatsu. This style of katsu frying has become popular enough to have its own restaurant chains and is a great way to enjoy many different types of ingredients. Some especially fun takes on kushikatsu are mochi, cheese (mozzarella stick...on a stick. Excellent.), and quail eggs, plus tons of veggies! Kushikatsu is a popular food in Osaka, the city known as the nation's kitchen.

Bento-box katsu: Menchikatsu and friends

Menchikatsu, a combination of mince-meat menchi and katsuretsu katsu, is essentially a hamburger or meatball that has been katsu deep fried. It is often billed as a "healthy" form of katsu because cabbage and onions are included in the patty. Other bento-box staples like ham cutlet get the katsu treatment too, and korokke use the same panko-frying technique to get their unique soft inside crunchy outside texture.



Photo by Toyakisphoto, Shutterstock



Seafood katsu: Ebi-fry and Aji-fry, etc.

Although the name is different, the prep method for making these seafood "fries" is the same as making katsu. Since dishes like ebi fry are made from whole shrimp, aji fry from fish filets, and ika fry from sections of squid, they don't receive the cutlet-shaped delineation of katsu. If you want a lighter taste with the same katsu crunch, try a fry! As a side note, ebikatsu does actually exist - in the form of a katsu-fried shrimp paste patty. Yum!



Photo by Katie Thompson, byFood

Hirekatsu: Actually, this one is tonkatsu?

Hire(hee-ray)katsu uses leaner cuts and has a reputation for being popular with women since it's a little more tender, less fatty, and higher quality compared to classic tonkatsu. The characteristic shape of tonkatsu is called "ros" or "roast" katsu, as opposed to hirekatsu. These are still made of pork but tend to come in a nugget or round shape instead of a slab and at a higher price point. The precise cuts for each classification vary depending on where you look, but fat-on pork katsu is usually ros, and lean is typically hire.



How to enjoy tonkatsu

The short answer is: However you like!
Even within Japan, people's preferences for tonkatsu vary greatly. The classic tonkatsu recipe is simple. Serve a panko breaded and fried sliced pork cutlet with a pile of shredded cabbage and drizzle it with tonkatsu-sauce. In Hokuriku, sauce tonkatsu features a pork cutlet dredged in sauce and served over rice donburi style, sometimes omitting the cabbage altogether. Nagoya is known for its miso-katsu using sweet miso sauce, and of course, you can class the dish up or down as you please. The best thing about katsu, ton or otherwise, is that it is a super versatile and always delicious way to enjoy Japanese food. So go out and explore the wonderful world of katsu!

Fun facts about katsu

The official unofficial companion to tonkatsu is bulldog brand sauce, but plenty of restaurants make their own. On Bulldog's English website they assert that it is indeed a form of washoku and not yoshoku. Rengatei, the inventor, calls it yoshoku, though! And so the debate continues...

Katsu sauce is based on British Worcestershire sauce, adapted to Japanese tastes. How's that for cultural exchange?

Originally, julienned carrots and other root vegetables formed the sides of cotolette, but shredded cabbage was quicker to prepare and its antioxidant properties helped break down the oiliness of tonkatsu, so it won out.

Katsudon is similar to oyakodon made with tonkatsu instead of chicken! You can easily adapt an oyakodon recipe into katsudon at home.



Photo by Katie Thompson, byFood

A ton of information

The word tonkatsu, born of a combination of languages and lifestyles, has taken on a life of its own. In the modern day, Katsu has globe trotted its way to become one of the most recognizable Japanese dishes on the planet, no matter what form it takes. If you've ever wondered, "what is whatever-katsu? Is it the same as tonkatsu? Why did they bring me soup?!" hopefully, this article helped.

byFood is a platform for food events in Tokyo, with over 80 experiences to choose from and a fantastic resource for learning about Japan's thriving food culture! What's more, byFood runs a charitable outreach program, the Food for Happiness Project, which donates 10 meals to children in Cambodia for each person who books a food event through our platform!




PICTURE-PERFECT
DESSERT

Kanten Japanese jelly

a sweet, healthy alternative

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES JAPAN

As a kid, every New Year I would look forward to a sweet jelly called kouhaku kanten. Kanten is a jelly made from boiled ten-gusa algae and seaweed. It is known for being low-calorie and rich in fiber, so it is often used as a healthy alternative to regular sweets.

If you are a foodie, you may have heard of or tried tokoroten, another Japanese food with a similar jelly texture to kanten. Though both tokoroten and kanten look the same, tokoroten retains some smell of the sea (weed) and kanten does not. This is because kanten is frozen and dried after boiling, which casts off the ocean odor.

According to officials of Nagano Prefecture, a major producing area of kanten, this unique food recipe was accidentally discovered by a lodging owner in Kyoto during the Edo Period (1603 – 1868). Tokoroten, on the other hand, can be traced earlier to the Heian Era (794 – 1185).

Back in the Edo times, it may have taken a lot of time and effort to create kanten from red algae, but these days konakanten, powdered kanten, saves us time. Konakanten is mixed with water and milk and once set with fruit, creates a photogenic food which has recently become a popular sweet to cook at home.

I found the recipe below online to try my hand at making the healthy and eye-catching treat. It was fun to mold the white jelly in a milk carton and see the way canned fruit can add vibrant colors to it. And most importantly, it tasted great and the soft texture was delightful.

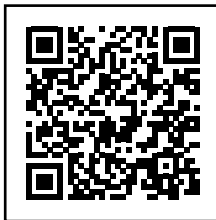
Making this dish was probably the least difficult of any of the previous dishes I've tried. The recipe did call for any cutting or slicing ingredients, so it only required time to heat the milk, water and condensed milk.

Though hearing that kanten is made from algae may make you second-guess trying it, I guarantee that after the first bite you will not care what it is made from. It is that delicious!

Why don't you try kanten and find what this unique Japanese food tastes like?

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

 CHECK OUT THE VIDEO



INGREDIENTS

Recipe adapted from Cookpad

- Milk (600 ml)
- Water (100 ml)
- Powdered kanten (4 g)
- Sugar (40 g)
- Condensed milk (30 g)
- Vanilla essence (a splash)
- Canned fruit, strained (one can of whatever fruit you like)
- Empty milk carton, washed (I used a milk carton with 946 ml capacity. Any size over 800 ml would suffice.)

DIRECTIONS

1 Pour the milk and condensed milk in a heat-resistant bowl. Microwave the mixture for three minutes (600w).



2 Measure out sugar and powdered kanten into the water in a pot over low heat. Stir the mixture while heating it. Once the mixture starts to boil, heat for two more minutes.



3 Next, add the microwaved milk and condensed milk to the pot and continue to heat the mixture over low heat. Remove from heat once mixture reaches a thick consistency.



Tip: Test the consistency by adding a drop to a wooden spatula. If the mixture runs, it is not ready. If the spot of the mixture sticks, then it is ready.

4 Mix in the vanilla essence then pour the mixture into an empty milk carton. (Make sure the milk carton is washed well). Tip: Pour the mixture through a tea strainer to keep your final product smooth.



5 Add in the strained canned fruit.

6 Close the milk carton and apply a laundry clipper to secure the top opening. Once it cools down, put it in the fridge to let it set for several hours (I refrigerated it overnight).



7 To remove the kanten, pour a splash of water to loosen it from the milk carton and gently slide it onto a plate. Alternatively, cut through an edge of the carton and use a splash of water to ease the process.



8 Cut into even portions, serve and enjoy with tea or coffee. いただきます (Bon appetite)!



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LIVE MÁS

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