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A Taste of Okinawa

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

4-page pullout

Shaved ice a tasty Japanese summer treat

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Summer in Japan gets scorching and steamy. Mid-summer Temperatures often reach 95 F or higher depending on the region. Along with beer, watermelon and soomen (cold udon noodle), kakigoori (shaved ice) is a popular cold food that cools us down during summer.

For many Japanese, the memories of a banner with the red kanji letter of koori (ice) in white and a blue background are fond ones. These banners are seen outside shops offering kakigoori and often meant a sweet, snow-like treat to help us cool down as kids.

Besides at local sweets stores, kakigoori can be found at matsuri and bon odori festivals or fireworks events, along with other festive foods.

“Kakigoori is one of the most popular traditional cold sweets throughout history,” says Ryusuke Koike, managing director of Japan Kakigoori Association. “This cold food goes back to more than 1,000 years and has been enjoyed as festive food for special occasions.”

Kakigoori is not only available during the summer, but it is a year-around cold dessert, according to Koike.

“Since a lot of kakigoori joints make their syrups and sauces using fruits in season, they offer different types of throughout the year,” Koike said.

In fact, there are countless types of syrups and sauces. While many places offer the standard strawberry, cherry, lemon, green tea, melon and colorless syrup, others offer unique syrups made from vegetables, sake, wine, or even vinegar, miso or soy sauce.

Japanese kakigoori may remind many of a snow cone, but there are few significant differences between the two iced sweets.”

“Japanese kakigoori has a really fine, smooth fluffy ice consistency, just like fresh fallen snow,” Koike said. “While Americans make snow cones with extreme hard ice, we would never do that to keep it soft and fluffy.”

Besides the difference of ice, snow cones usually come with artificial flavors, while kakigoori uses more natural syrups and ingredients, such as sweet beans, matcha and brown sugar.

But, despite a key difference in the flavoring, the main part of kakigoori is actually the ice, according to Koike.

“Most of kakigoori joints pay more attention on the quality of ice, rather than varieties of syrups, since quality and condition of ice determines the taste of kakigoori,” Koike said.

For Japanese kakigoori, extreme cold ice is not good. For a fluffy snow-like soft texture, the ice temperature needs to be kept around 14 F.

“Since ice in freezer is usually around - 4 F, we need to take out the ice and warm it up before we shave it,” Koike said.

Clean and transparent ice is ideal, as it can make smooth, fluffy kakigoori. Water that takes a long time to freeze can make clean ice.

“Natural ice is considered the best,” Koike said.

Why not make kakigoori yourself?

You can make a transparent ice yourself. Wrap an ice tray with a towel before putting it into a freezer.

This will make the ice take longer to freeze which should ensure the ice is transparent, according to Koike.

Then, you can shave it by using a hand-spinning ice shaver, which can be found at various stores for around \$30-40.

The hand-cranked ice shaver is a popular kitchen item in

Japan. It is fun making kakigoori by spinning a block of ice over a blade by turning the lever by hands. Syrups for kakigoori are available at most of supermarkets or grocery stores.

According to Japan Kakigoori Association, there are some tips to making tasty kakigoori at home: Use mineral water instead of tap water when you make ice. Serve it in a glass bowl to make the colors stand out, and be sure not to put on too many toppings as it can spoil the fluffy texture.

Now that you know, get out and enjoy the hot Japan summer with some cool kakigoori!

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Did you know?

Kakigoori is a popular cold treat in ball parks. Yokohama Stadium offers Mikan Goori (ice orange) while Jingu Stadium (Tokyo) offers Pine Goori (pineapple ice) during ball games. Koshien Stadium (near Osaka) offers simple “Kachiwari” (literally shaved ice).

Make your own

BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

It doesn’t get much better than eating shaved ice during the summer. But making the cold sweets at home offers a different sense of joy.

Kakigoori-ki (shave ice machine) is a common item for families with children in this country. Just like many flavors are introduced at shops every year, shaved iced machines are also evolving to show great variety. But there is a trend commonly seen in many of them: nostalgia.

“Kyro-chan” is a shaved ice machine

that looks like a cubby bear doll.

Originally released in 1976, this cute looking machine became a hit back then. When the handle on the top is turned, the cubby’s eyes move left and right. The name Kyro-chan refers to this gimmick, which was pealing to kids.

Although it was discontinued for a while, Kyro-chan was brought back in the same design.

“Ice Robo III Hatsuyuki” is

Okin

BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
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When summer rolls around and the temperature rises, the shaved ice scene also heats up on Okinawa.

Local stores become busy shaving ice blocks to give customers a quick break from heat. Shaved ice’s popularity is something common across the country, but on this subtropical island, however, the cold desserts also reflect a unique food culture.

Tamaya is a shaved ice store a ten-minute drive from Gate 3 of Kadena Air Base. It is a place where many locals come looking for “zenzai” shaved ice.

Normally, the word “zenzai” refers to sweet red bean soup in Japan.

Left: Ichigo, Above: Mango, Ruan + Shimairo

Zenzai, Tamaya



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popular shaved ice machine with a retro look. At first glance, the yellow, red and green machine almost looks like a character out of an old Nintendo game. But, on the inside, this machine has an advanced system that can automatically make shaved ice, even allowing to adjust sizes.

“Dendo Honkaku Fuwafuwa Kakigori-Ki” (electric-powered machine for totally fluffy shaved ice) goes further back in time to dig up people’s memory of shaved ice.

It is said that Kakigori-ki became commonly available in the Showa era (1926 – 1989). This machine has wheels and a logo

that can remind Japanese of when they ate shaved ice at stores in their neighborhood back in the day.

Thanks to an updated system, this retro-looking machine can shave ice to fluffy flakes, something only stores could provide back then.

These shaved ice machines are closely associated with people’s happy memories of having the cold sweets as a child. The sense of fun and nostalgia is so strong that you could feel it even if you didn’t live in Japan in those days.

Did you know?

In Japan, kakigoori has been enjoyed for more than 1000 years. Makuranososhi, an essay by Seisho Nagon, has a description of people enjoying kakigoori in the 11th century.

Nawa’s cool scene

But on Okinawa, it commonly means shaved ice topped with red kidney beans and white rice cake balls. Many local stores serve up this unique dessert, with banners and flags with the word “zenzai” often seen along streets.

Tamaya is one of the stores where people can see the zenzai boom - where the cold sweets are evolving into something special.

At first glance, the store’s shaved ice looks like cotton candy because of its exceptional size and fluffy texture. The heap of shaved ice is almost three times the size of a plastic cup, presenting a look of a small snow mountain.

“Many customers are surprised with the size,” said the store owner. “It is my motto to satisfy customers as much as possible for a reasonable price (400 yen for zenzai, 450 yen for milk zenzai) even though it takes more time and effort.”

His dedication to zenzai goes deep. Once digging in, customers find out

the sweet taste of the beans and syrup from top to bottom. The texture and taste don’t stop entertaining customers’ taste buds from the beginning to the end.

There are a couple of clues the shop owner shared with me as to how to make tasty shaved ice. First, ice blocks should not be shaved immediately after being taken out of a freezer. Giving it 10 minutes or so before shaving is a key to making fluffy flakes. Plus, stacking shaved ice should not be done all at once, but in a couple of parts. This way, syrup can be poured in each part at a time.

Sounds easy? Maybe not.

Making a big, fluffy and tasty zenzai shaved ice like Tamaya’s takes experience, skills and dedication.

“I had an experience of carving ice before launching the shop,” the owner said. “Some knowledge I learned through the experience and my expertise as a professional cook helped me a lot.”

Plus, the beans used for his zenzai are specific ones bought at a certain store in Naha. They need to be cooked carefully so that they have enough sweetness.

The owner’s dedication to zenzai translates to other varieties offered at the store. Flavors such as strawberry, dragon fruit (seasonal) and mango are available there. Although zenzai is a hard sell for Americans, fruit-flavored shaved ice is popular among them, according to the owner.

“When it comes to fruit-flavored shaved ice, Americans eat more than Japanese do,” said the owner. “Ichigo milk (strawberry milk) is the most popular.”

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Ichigo Milk, Tamaya

Did you know?

Colorful artificial syrups for kakigoori are sold in most of grocery stores throughout the nation. Although they are sold with different names, including lemon (yellow), strawberry (red), melon (green) and Blue Hawaii (blue), their tastes are all the same.

Uji Macha File photo

Kuro mitsu kinako, Tamaya



Serving up special pizza each month on Kadena

On Kadena, there are many options for great pizza, but don't forget that Banyan Tree Pizza & Grill serves up a special pie each month. This month, we are incredibly excited to share the details about our Chorizo Pizza! Featuring red peppers, onion, mushrooms, diced tomato, jalapeno and chorizo, the flavors are paired nicely with cheese and buttery crust. Banyan Tree Pizza and Grill offers pizza by the slice, perfect for a lunch stop, or order an entire pie for \$16.95. Don't forget if you live on Kadena, delivery is available. Let Banyan Tree Pizza and Grill do the work for you!

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RESTAURANT INFO

A Taste of Okinawa

Thank you for your service, welcome to Kenny's!

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Only 6000 Yen per couple including tax ※The photo is an image.



Kenny's serves a variety of delicious foods and drinks

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PLAZAHOUSE STORE
Tel.098-930-0570
3F,3-1-12 Kubota,Okinawa



AEON MALL
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Dinner 17:00-22:00 (Last order 21:00)
Closed for dinner on Sundays

Subject to change, please contact us for updates

NAHA SHINTOSHIN STORE
Tel.098-861-3007
2F,1-1-2 Omoromachi,Naha



Gusto
TSUTAYA
Naha City
Waterworks
Bureau

Lunch 11:30-15:00 (Last order 14:00)
Dinner 17:00-22:00 (Last order 21:00)
Close Wednesday



Check Takeout
and Delivery



RESTAURANT
KENNY'S

RESTAURANT INFO