A Taste of Okinawa

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

8-page pullout
There is something very comforting about sitting around a bubbling hot pot with friends and family. Often rich with a variety of vegetables, hot pots are also very nourishing. A nabe (Japanese hot pot) is an easy meal to put on the table with a simple clean-up, as it is a one-pot meal. Some famous styles include sukiyaki, shabu-shabu, or chankonabe (known as the sumo wrestler’s meal). These dishes can be found in restaurants, but cooking nabe at home is really a breeze and recently there has even been a trend of hitori nabe (hot pot for solo diners) — so don’t let that hold you back from getting started.

Keeping in mind that there are a few guidelines but no set rules for cooking nabe, here are some basics to get you started.

The most essential equipment are the konro (tabletop butane gas stove) and hot pot. The size of the pot should be determined by the number of people you are cooking for. There are many styles of hot pots but to get started, a donabe (clay pot) is the most versatile. Do note that it needs to be seasoned with rice before using for the first time.

When you’re thinking of what to put in it, for proteins, consider: chicken, sliced pork belly, beef, fish (like cod or salmon) or shellfish; ground chicken or pork can be formed into meatballs; even frozen gyoza could be your protein. For vegetables, use a wide variety including daikon, hakusai (Napa cabbage), carrots, shungiku (edible chrysanthemum), komatsuna (Japanese mustard spinach), mushrooms, leeks or cabbage; and use mushrooms such as enoki, shiitake, and shimeji. Shirataki (chewy konnyaku noodles) add a nice texture, but check the package as some need to be boiled in water to get rid of the “off” aroma before being added into the nabe.

Dipping sauces can be purchased or made at home. If you’re not feeling like the traditional ponzu, gomadare (a creamy sesame dressing) is just as easy to find. Fun condiments like yuzu kosho, a salty chili paste, can also add another dimension to the meal.

Mizutaki, a chicken-based nabe, is a popular recipe to get started with. Add water and a piece of kombu (a variety of kelp) into your pot, then let this simmer while preparing the ingredients. Cut some boneless chicken into bite-size pieces. Cut hakusai, leeks and momen (firm) tofu into similar-sized cubes. Slice carrots into thin leaves. Break down mushrooms like shimeji or shiitake into smaller pieces. Turn off the heat on your konro, remove the kombu and add the ingredients to the pot. Put the lid on and boil until the chicken is cooked through. While the ingredients are cooking, skim off any scum as it has bitter flavors. Dip the cooked vegetables and chicken in ponzu before eating.

The broth should be well seasoned by this point. Once you’ve finished all the vegetables and meat, add some pre-cooked noodles or rice to the soup. If you like, scramble an egg into the hot rice porridge. Taste and add salt if necessary.

Another simple hot pot is buta-kimchi, made with thin-sliced pork belly, kimchi, kinu (soft) tofu and shimeji mushrooms. Finish the pot with harusame rice noodles. A vegetarian mushroom hot pot could be made with tofu, a variety of mushrooms, hakusai and shungiku.

Once you get the hang of things you can get creative and make your own original hot pot. As mentioned, these are your guidelines: cut proteins into bite-size pieces; slice harder vegetables like carrots into thin slices; softer vegetables like hakusai can be cut into bigger pieces.

There are two resourceful cookbooks on hot pots. Japanese Hot Pots: Comforting One-Pot Meals by Tadashi Ono and Harris Salat (Ten Speed Press) is filled with classic Japanese hot pot recipes. Donabe: Classic and Modern Japanese Clay Pot Cooking by Naoko Moore and Kyle Connaughton (Ten Speed Press) includes hot pot recipes as well as a plethora of recipes for cooking in a variety of donabe pots like a smoker, steamer and rice pot.

If you’re just getting started consider getting a cheaper pot and test the waters before splurging on a donabe.
Indulging in delicious food is one of the best parts of the holidays, and you’ll likely be in constant need of something tasty to take along to all those holiday potlucks. To be ready for any invitation, keep ingredients for your favorite recipes on-hand and use multipurpose kitchen tools, like a high-performance blender, to expedite prep time, quickly chop veggies or cheese, and blend everything from dips and batters to dressings and sauces.

Not sure what to make for your next potluck? Here are some simple, crowd-pleasing recipes.

**APPETIZERS**

Small-bite hors d’oeuvres are perfect potluck fare. Dips or spreads served with veggies and chips are quick to make and travel easily. Try a cashew French onion dip for a non-dairy version of the traditional favorite.

Be sure to soak the cashews ahead of time to achieve a super-smooth texture. If you’re able to keep food warm, a hearty spinach artichoke dip with pita bread will satisfy guests’ cravings for comfort foods. Or, take a new twist on a conventional recipe with a cauliflower hummus. It’s extra creamy and has an added boost of veggies from the addition of roasted cauliflower.

**SIDE DISHES**

Casseroles will feed a crowd and most can be served at room temperature. Made with russet potatoes and onions, a cheesy potato casserole with cornflake topping won’t last long at any gathering. It’s a satisfying substitute for traditional hash browns at brunch, and is great for all ages. Alternatively, a vegetarian butternut squash casserole is a light, sweet complement to heavier potluck fare.

Or, if you’re short on ingredients or inspiration, a frittata filled with cheese, veggies and protein (whatever you have on hand) will work. Bake or slow cook the frittata the night before and add a quick sprinkle of herbs or chives before packing it to go.

**DESSERTS**

If you have a sweet tooth, it only makes sense to volunteer to bring your favorite dessert. Save time by using a high-performance blender like the Vitamix A2300 Ascent Series blender to mix batter in advance for a big batch of almond cookies or snickerdoodles. If baking for a cookie exchange or large gathering, start early and freeze the cookies until party day. Cakes, pumpkin and apple pies are also easy to make ahead and freeze.

Simply wrap a freshly baked, cooled cake or pie in plastic wrap and place in a freezer bag. Before an event, defrost in the bag at room temperature.

If your dish has multiple components, separate warm and cold items during transport and use insulated carriers to maintain optimal temperatures. Make something that doesn’t require a ton of prep time and equipment once you arrive, unless you’ve asked the host in advance. Bring trivets or serving utensils, if needed, and don’t assume the host will have extras.

Don’t get caught unprepared this holiday party season. The right ingredients and tools will make you a hit at any potluck, even at a moment’s notice.

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**Ho-ho-holiday margaritas**

The holidays are quickly approaching and so are the (sometimes much needed) holiday cocktails! This yummy concoction is one my family is anxiously awaiting.

**Ingredients (Servings: 2):**
- 1 (14 ounces) can coconut milk
- 12 ounces silver tequila
- 8 ounces triple sec
- 1/2 cup lime juice
- 2 cup ice
- 1 lime
- Sanding sugar (for rimming glass)
- 1/2 c. Mint (to make it pretty)
- 1 lime (The pretty thing and to run around the rim of the glass)
- Cranberries, for garnish

**Direction:**
1. Blend coconut milk, tequila, triple sec, lime juice and ice until smooth.
2. Rim glasses with lime a wedge and then dip in sanding sugar. Pour the blended goodness into a glass and garnish with lime and cranberries. Serve and listen for the chorus of “Mmmm, that’s good!”

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**StatePoint**
The new year is a time to ring in the new year's feast around the "kotatsu," a low table with a heater underneath to keep us warm and cozy. There was an important time of year when we celebrate New Year's with relatives. It is our shrines for the coming year. It is our days of the year praying at temples and shrines. During New Year's, stores across the island will have traditional Japanese New Year's fare on offer.

The first quarter or half of January is commonly called "oshogatsu." It refers to the whole month of January as well. The first three days of the month are called "sanganichi" and are the main dishes on a typical Japanese family's table. Ozoni is a clear soup that contains "mochi," a glutinous rice cake; fish cake; chicken; leafy greens; carrots; shiitake mushrooms; and maybe more. The soup stock varies from region to region. In most of mainland Japan it may be flavored with seaweed or "bonito" (dried fish flakes). People make miso-based ozoni in western regions like Kansai. In Okinawa, instead of ozoni, people eat "nakamijiru," a soup made with chitterlings.

From ancient times, mochi has been a celebratory food in Japan representing fortune. Today, you can still see it at traditional events and elsewhere in the form of white, stacked, circular cakes (or packaged squares at grocers) – especially this time of year. You'll also see a lot of mochi pouding events where large mallets are used to pound steamed rice into mochi. Although mochi is not a traditional ingredient in nakamijiru, nowadays it may be added to this Okinawan dish just like ozoni. It's tasty but be careful.

"There have been cases when people, especially the elderly and small children, have severely choked on this densely chewy treat. So watch out when you eat mochi for the first time. But once you try really good ozoni, you will be obsessed with the awesome taste. This is, by far, my favorite New Year's dish. Then there is oscehi, which literally means beginning a new season and represents the start of the new year.

This is a set of selected dishes. It's kind of like a fancy bento box for the entire family that is eaten during sanganichi, sometimes for all three meals. Osechi consists of foods that can be prepared in advance and keep for a few days without spoiling. Traditionally, it ensured everyone got a three-day break, even mothers and wives who had to cook and wash dishes. Also, most stores and restaurants used to be closed during oshogatsu.

These days, some stores open Jan. 1 because business can be good. It is believed that oscehi started during the Edo Period (1603-1867) when coming up with a variety prepared foods that would keep for three days was a pretty amazing feat. For those who don't have a lot of time or desire to prepare oscehi, you can order them from companies at supermarkets and online. You can even order one at

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**A TASTE OF OKINAWA**

**Ozone**

If you are lucky to be in Okinawa for New Year’s, you’ll find elements of two culinary traditions to sample. Because of its Ryukyu Kingdom history, Japan’s southernmost islands have their own indigenous dishes as well as those from mainland Japan.

“In Okinawa, families gathered to celebrate New Year’s with special foods that were served at ceremonies and feast year round, not just foods for New Year’s,” says Yayoi Kohagura, of the Okinawa prefectural government. “But even since Okinawa was returned to Japan (in 1972), New Year’s foods have caught on. Nowadays, many people eat Okinawan and Japanese foods for New Year’s.”

Local dishes you should be on the lookout for in restaurants include “rafute” (pork belly), “taamu” (taro and “inamuruchi” (white miso soup with chopped pork). While at the same time, stores across the island will have traditional Japanese New Year’s fare on offer.

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“..."
Okinawan delicacies

Nakamijiru (pork guts soup)

Nakamijiru is popularly known as a celebration food from Ryukyu Kingdom. The key of cooking this soup is that you need to prepare well to take out the smell of pork guts. The soup tastes simple yet rich.

**Ingredients for 4 servings:**
- 10.6 oz pork intestines and stomach or nakami
- 3.5 oz konnyaku
- 4 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 4 cups bonito flake soup stock
- 2 lbs salt
- small soy sauce
- small grated ginger
- flour

1. Soak shiitake mushrooms into water until soft. Slice them to the same size as nakami pieces.
2. Put konnyaku into boiling water and cook it for 2-3 minutes and slice them.
3. In a bowl, put wet nakami with water and add flour. Rub nakami with flour and rinse with running water. Repeat 2 to 3 times until nakami to take out the grease.
4. Put nakami into boiling water and cook for 20 mins. Change into fresh boiling water and cook for 20 mins. Repeat three times. This is to take out the smell of guts.
5. When nakami is soft, drain the water. Slice nakami into 2-6 cm by 1 cm pieces. Boil nakami pieces in a sauce pan again. Drain and dry nakami in a bamboo basket or strainer.
7. Serve in a Japanese soup bowl with grated ginger to taste.

Kobumaki (stir-fried seaweed)

Okinawa is one of the most seaweed consumption prefectures in Japan. Okinawans loved seaweed from long time ago. The combination of seaweed and pork makes very rich flavor. Seaweed contains lots of dietary fiber which helps to clean intestine system.

**Ingredients for 4 servings:**
- 0.44 lb seaweed
- 1.25 lb pork belly
- 7 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 0.44 lb konnyaku
- 0.22 lb fishcake

(Sauce)
- 4 lbs sugar
- 4 lbs mirin
- 4 lbs sake
- 6 lbs soy sauce
- 4 cups of bonito flake soup stock

1. Rinse seaweed with running water, wipe with kitchen towel and slice it about 1.1 inch width. Boil the seaweed for a minute and take it out.
2. Soak shiitake mushrooms into water until soft. Cut into pieces.
3. Put konnyaku into boiling water and cook it for 2-3 minutes and slice them.
4. Cut fishcakes into pieces about half inch width.
5. Cut pork belly into pieces. Put oil into frying pan and cook pork until cooked.
6. And then add konnyaku, seaweed and shiitake mushrooms and stir fry.
7. Add sauce and cook with low heat for 20 minutes.

Osechi' dishes

Tazukuri represents praying for a large catch and a good harvest. Don’t be afraid to eat the head! Kombumaki or Koubumaki is kelp roll and stuffed with salmon or chicken, which has been cooked in a sweet soy sauce-based sauce. The name of kobumaki is a play on words; which mean joy in Japanese, so it’s eaten for good luck food during New Year’s.

SEE OSECHI ON PAGE 6
**Osechi: A yearly tradition**

Continued from Page 5

**Datemaki** is a Japanese-style omelet with fish paste. Because the shape of datemaki resembles a scroll, it stands for cultural development.

**Kurikinton** is sweet potatoes and chestnuts, which can look something like yellow mashed potatoes. This is a child favorite. Kurikinton is believed to bring you wealth because the color looks like gold.

**Kamaboko** is a dense cake of fish paste. The combination of red and white is used on happy occasions in Japan. Another red-and-white food you’ll find is called **namasu**, which is daikon radish and carrots pickled in vinegar.

**Kohada no awazuke** is spotted shad pickled in foxtail millet. People started using this in osechi because it is pickled and can keep for many. To get rid of all the small bones, the fish is cut into three slices and salt is added to the pickle mixture.

**Ebi** or shrimp represents long life because it has long whiskers. Also, shrimp curls when it is cooked like an old person. It is considered good luck because you will live until your back bends like an old person’s.

**Tanmu Dengaku** (mashed taro potato)

It is sweet mashed taro potato, which is popular as a celebration snack or easy celebration food in Okinawa.

**Ingredients for 4 servings:**
- 0.9 lb taro potato
- 1 cup of hot water
- 8 tbs sugar
- 6 tbs mirin
- small amount of salt

1. Used the steamed taro potato that you can buy at store. If it’s raw, you need to steam it. Peel the taro potato and cut into pieces about 1 inch width.
2. Put water and taro potato into a pot. And cook it until taro potato become soft. And add sugar.
3. Mash with wooden stick or spoon and add mirin. Add salt to adjust the taste you like.

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Located inside the Kadena Officer’s Club, Café Latte offers an array of breakfast items, gourmet sandwiches, pizzas, and classic choices along with some popular Okinawan dishes such as taco rice and yakisoba. There is a full-service Starbucks Coffee bar, as well as an assortment of desserts to include homemade cookies! Breakfast is served all day and Café Latte offers two limited-time specials each month! This month choose between the Christmas Morning Frittata or the Nonnino’s Meatball Sub! All ranks and branches welcome! Hours of Operation: Monday – Thursday 6:30 a.m. – 10 p.m.; Friday 6:30 a.m. – 12 a.m.; Saturday 7:30 a.m. – 12 a.m.; Sunday 2 – 10 p.m.
Ingredients: pork loin (1 block, 227g), pork picnic (1 block, 321g), pork belly (1 block, 393g), raw noodles (3 bags), minced and steamed fish, green onion, ginger, red pickled ginger, soy sauce, sweet cooking rice wine and cooking sake.

1. Fill two pots with water.
2. Put pork loin and pork picnic in one of them and heat it up on a stove for about 50 minutes.
3. Roast the pork belly skin on a grill. When it’s lightly burnt, take off the stove.
4. Shave the skin with a razor to remove fuzzy hair.
5. Put the pork belly in the other pot and heat it on a stove for about 50 minutes.
6. While heating up the two pots, skim off foam and cover the pots with a lid, but leave a small gap to let heated air out.
7. From time to time, check on the softness of the pork loin and belly by piercing with a stick.
8. After about 50 minutes, take out the pork loin, picnic and belly from the pot and cut them into small pieces. Leave the broth of pork loin and picnic in the pot, and dump the broth of pork belly (or put it in another pot or bowl).
9. Put the pieces back in one of the pots which was previously used for heating up pork bellies.
10. Pour sweet cooking rice wine, soy sauce, and cooking sake in the pot. For each condiment, make two circles around the pot as you pour. (The amount of condiment is up to individual’s preference.)
11. Cover the pot with a lid and heat on a stove about 20 to 30 minutes. Make sure you stop before the liquid dries up in the pan. Sample the taste and add sugar if you prefer to make it taste sweeter.
12. Put two handfuls of dried bonito flakes in the broth left in the pot for pork loin and picnic, and heat on a stove. When the broth comes to a boil, take the pot off the stove and strain the broth with a net.
13. Put the broth back in the pot.
14. Wash the soba noodles in hot water.
15. Heat up the broth, and combine with noodles, pork loin and bellies. Top the soba noodles with grated ginger, red ginger, sliced green onion, and Kooree Goose (Awamori liquor flavor with hot chili).
16. Enjoy a tasty meal and good luck for 2022!
Kenny’s serving up food and fun on Okinawa

Welcome to Kenny’s! Okinawa’s popular restaurant. Come and enjoy our extensive menu selection including couple’s specials, steak, chicken and seafood. We’ll also help you quench you thirst with our extensive drink menu. Try our famously delicious buffet-style lunch and come back for dinner. We are located in the Plaza House Shopping Center in Okinawa City, which offers unlimited free parking. Take out and Uber Eats delivery are available and we accept credit cards and yen. Walk in or make reservations, and party space is available. Bring the whole family and let us take care of you!

A Taste of Okinawa

Thank you for your service! Come to Transit Café and enjoy some of the best food and drinks on Okinawa and relax as the blue sky gradually changes into yellow and orange over the sea. Stop by before you “transit” to your next destination! Open daily with takeout available from 11:30 a.m. – 9 p.m. and delivery available or stay home and we’ll deliver to you. Call 098-936-5076 for free home delivery on orders over $35.00 (yen or cash only). Please order one day in advance. Delivery area limited to Chatan, Kadena, Yomitan and Okinawa City. Check out our delivery menu at www.transitcafe-okinawa.com

Eat here, take it out or free delivery!

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