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A Taste of Okinawa

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Restaurants,
Reviews & Recipes

4-page pullout



Kanten Japanese jelly a sweet, healthy alternative

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

As a kid, every New Year I would look forward to a sweet jelly called kouhaku kanten.

Kanten is a jelly made from boiled tengusa 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?



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)!



Why is Hokkaido milk, cream and cheese so popular?



BY ANDY CHENG,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Historically, Japan has never been a large-scale dairy producing country. However, in the Northern Island of Hokkaido, some of the finest milk, cream and cheese are attracting global interest. At the forefront of Hokkaido's dairy produce is its famous milk, 60% of which is used for whole milk and the remainder for other dairy products. The cool climate, fresh air and plentiful grazing land make for ideal conditions which help Hokkaido contribute to more than half of all of Japan's milk production. In 2018, Hokkaido produced over 4 million tons of milk, accounting for 55% of Japan's annual production of 7.3 million tons (FY2018 "Milk Dairy Products Statistics," Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Statistics Department). So how did Hokkaido gain its reputation as the "Kingdom of the Dairy Industry?"

Taking a brief look at the history of milk production in Japan, it was not widely prevalent until the Meiji Era (1868-1912). The boom of drinking milk led to the production of Japan's first cheese at Nanae Public Garden in 1875. The Emperor of Japan indulged in Hokkaido's cheese and other dairy products, which put the area in the spotlight of Japan's culinary scene. This triggered the rise of dairy farms throughout Hokkaido as



Photos courtesy of Metropolis magazine



the Sapporo Agricultural College began to import "Ayrshire" and "Holstein" milking cows. In the 1960s, the westernization of the Japanese diet increased the demand for milk and dairy products, leading to the expansion of dairy farms, facilities and the improve-

ment of grasslands. This remarkable rise in demand led to environmental problems due to the heavy consumption of imported concentrates. Cows were now producing extra feces and urine, which could not be absorbed and used by plants — thus it was not a sustainable method of dairy production. The solution was to promote a more soil-grass-animal interaction

based on land use. As a result, grazing on open lands became the most viable sustainable production system in harmony with the environment.

Now, dairy cattle are predominately raised in Eastern and Northern Hokkaido — the vast meadows and cool climate lend themselves to environmentally friendly dairy production. Betsukai Town, located on the Eastern coast of Hokkaido, boasts the largest milk production in Japan — with roughly seven cows per person. Vast grasslands and the neighboring Lake Mashu help filter water, creating the perfect conditions for raising healthy cows. Niseko Takahashi Dairy Farm and Furano Cheese Kobo are just a selection from a host of farms and producers that are free to visit in order to catch a glimpse into the world of dairy production.

One of Hokkaido's most popular foods is soft cream, the sweet and creamy texture from the Hokkaido milk is beloved all over Japan. Minatogaoka Street in Hakodate is an entire street in the Motomachi neighborhood dedicated to soft cream. For those outside of Hokkaido, Cremia soft serve is instantly recognizable for its graceful wavy silk pattern, and thin langue de chat cone.

Hokkaido's special miso ramen, which is often topped with a slice of butter, attracts thousands of ramen lovers across the world each year. The use of butter is an added unique twist to the traditional bowl of ramen. For those that associate Japanese food with tradition, this type of ramen might be a surprise but it is a perfect representation of Hokkaido's use of its delicious dairy.

A Taste of Okinawa

SEASIDE Anniversary CELEBRATION



KADENA AIR BASE
FORCE
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Celebrate with us April 9 with **giveaways**, discounts!

Join Seaside at Kadena Marina on Saturday, April 9, 9 a.m. - 10 p.m., as we celebrate three years of serving delicious, affordable Surf & Turf cuisine to the Okinawa community. Enjoy live music, fantastic giveaways, and special menu items! We will have live quartet performances and a DJ throughout the day. All orders 10% off, plus the chance to win 10-100% off coupons and vouchers for free meals! Don't forget to try our special anniversary dessert: Torte a la Seaside. A perfect way to close out a culinary celebration of our Third Anniversary. No reservations needed. Call 036-868-2213 | 966-7401

RESTAURANT INFO



Tasty Mexican cuisine for the whole family

Esparza's Tacos and Coffee prides itself in original recipes and homemade tortillas and chips. We also serve a variety of delicious vegan items like our Chunky Chorizo in an effort to cater to those who are conscious about health, animal rights and the environment. Our menu boasts mouth-watering tacos, bowls, nachos, a selection of alcoholic beverages, and more! House specialties such as our homemade Ginger Ale, Ginger Latte, Steak Tacos, and Holy Guacamole Chicken Bowls are must tries! If you are looking for tasty Mexican cuisine, then Esparza's Tacos and Coffee is the place for you!



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RESTAURANT INFO

A Taste of Okinawa

RESTAURANT & SUSHI BAR GEN



We're located just outside Camp Foster Globe & Anchor Gate No.3



Open every day 10:30-22:00
(Last order 21:00)
Cash Only(\$/¥)



Gen a real gem on Okinawa

Offering authentic Japanese and Okinawan cuisine at a reasonable price, Gen was recognized in Stripes' Best of the Pacific 2013 as the best restaurant to experience the local culture on Okinawa. Owner and Head Chef Naoki Tsukayama highly recommends the "Fish Garlic Butter Combo," a popular dish among American customers. Tsukayama and his staff make you feel at home, so stop by and enjoy a delicious meal. Gen is located across from Camp Foster's fire station. Just look for shi-shi dogs on a traditional Okinawan tile roof outside Foster's Fire Station Gate.

RESTAURANT INFO