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Taemi's Osaka Style Okonomiyaki



Taemi mixes batter with chopsticks



Taemi's Okonomiyaki cooking



(Makes 3 large pancakes, or six small)

Okonomiyaki is traditional Japanese savory pancake, which can be served as a main dish or a side. It is made in three distinct styles: Osaka, Hiroshima and Tokyo. The Osaka Okonomiyaki is the type that Taemi prefers, and is made with a batter of flour, egg and water, mixed with assorted vegetables, including a Japanese sticky yam, and seafood, pork or other meat. Hiroshima style is made by layering the ingredients on top of a crepe-like base, and then served over fried noodles and a fried egg. Tokyo style is made as a very large, thin pancake, cooked to golden brown, and served family-style, with each person using their own Okonomiyaki spatula to scrape up bites.

The liquid used in the pancake can either be water or Dashi, a broth that is essential to Japanese cuisine, made from water, shaved Bonita fish and dried kelp. (See recipe below.)

Whichever style one chooses, the dish is usually served with traditional toppings such Okonomiyaki sauce, mayonnaise, dried Bonita fish shavings and even seaweed.

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup water or Dashi

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 egg

1/2 cup grated nagaimo (Japanese mountain yam-available at Asian markets-see information box below)

Pinch salt

2 cups finely chopped green cabbage

1 tablespoon mayonnaise

Peanut or vegetable oil, for frying

1 tablespoon finely sliced scallions (optional)

1 tablespoon sliced, pickled ginger (optional)

9 slices of pork belly, or bacon

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, mix dashi (or water) with flour, egg, grated nagaimo (nagaimo will turn into a sticky, thick liquid when grated), mayonnaise and salt. Whisk until smooth with a wire whisk or chopsticks, until smooth. Add cabbage and any other optional ingredients and mix well until cabbage is evenly coated with batter.

Heat one tablespoon of oil in a frying pan or griddle over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, spoon 1/3 of the batter into the pan to form a pancake shape, about 1/2-inch thick. If using the pork belly, place three pieces on top of pancake. When the edges of the pancake begin to dry and form bubbles (approximately 2-3 minutes), flip pancake so pork belly is on the bottom. When the pancake is golden brown and the pork is cooked, turn pancake over again, and continue to heat for 1-2 more minutes. Press the pancake and, if it is



Taemi-Nagaimo-Japanese yam



Taemi's Okonomiyaki with Bonita fish flakes

resilient, it's done. Place on warm plate.

Repeat process until all batter is used, or if you have a large griddle or pan, you can cook as many pancakes as will fit so you can easily flip them.

To serve, place the pancakes on individual serving plates. Toppings are optional, but recommended for a traditional taste. First spread the Okonomiyaki sauce over the pancake. Then squeeze mayonnaise on the top creating a swirl design. Sprinkle with seaweed seasoning of choice, and finally sprinkle with dried Bonita fish flakes. Ideally, the pancakes are hot enough when serving so the fish flakes will begin to move and shrivel up. This is fun to watch!

Dashi

(can be found prepared in Asian markets, too)

INGREDIENTS

One 4-inch piece dried kelp

4 cups cold water

1 cup of Katsuobushi (shaved Bonita fish flakes)

DIRECTIONS

Rinse kelp and cook in the water to a simmer and remove from heat. Add the dried Bonita flakes and cover. Let steep for approximately 15 minutes. Any remaining Dashi can be refrigerated for a few days.

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