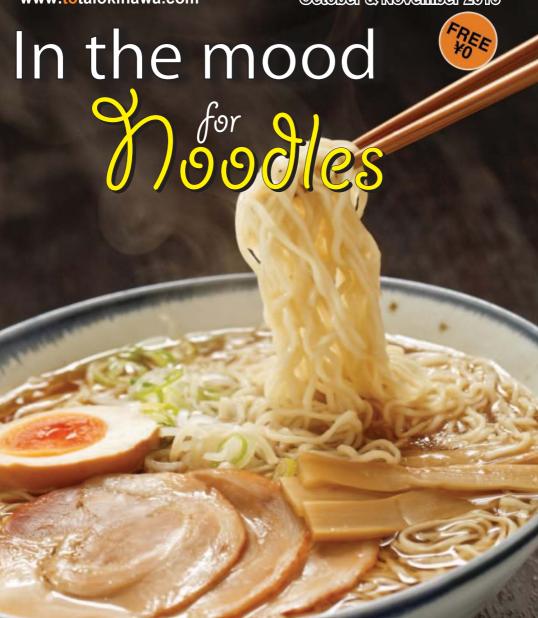


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**OCTOBER & NOVEMBER** 2013

Issue 18

# In the Mood for **nondes** The Noodle Issue



Nove over, fried rice. In our cover story, we explore the beloved Japanese noodle, in its many forms and flavors. Plus, don't miss our detailed reviews of noodle restaurants Ramen Kameya and Marugame Seimen Udon. Also, check out our review on the Okinawa YOHO honey store; you'll "bee"

craving a bottle or two for your own sweet stash. And, we've got our latest dive report and issue of Weird & Wonderful.

Also view the magazine online at: www.totalokinawa.com



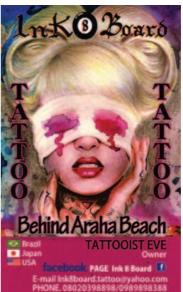
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## FFATURE IN THE MOOD FOR NOODLES

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# **Local Shop Review**

by Melissa Nazario

### **YOHO Okinawa**

YOHO-ho! And a bottle of honey--Local shop offers sweet selections.



umans' use of honey for medicinal reasons dates back thousands of years. Egyptians used it to dress wounds and embalm bodies. Today, there are lots of claims that honey can do much more, from preventing diseases to being a "better" sugar for diabetics (it's not—it packs more calories and carbs and has the same effect as table sugar).

### Miracle food? Not really

While most claims are unfounded, research does show that honey is antibacterial, antifungal, and an effective cough suppressant. So while the sweet stuff may not really curb allergy symptoms (ragweed and other airborne pollen are different than bee pollen), it is natural (for the most part) and helps fight off salmonella and other bacteria. And, let's not forget, it's quite tasty, too.

### Try before you buy

We wanted to taste some honey from a local shop, and found one of the Okinawa YOHO stores on 58. Inside, there were 5 different varieties to sample, though surprisingly, only one contained Okinawan honey, mixed with Chinese honey. Packaged with a white label, it was light and summery, no doubt a result of the tropical flowers grown on island. In fact, it's called "100 Flower Honey." The three Chinese varieties were darker shades, with deeper, more complex notes that wouldn't get lost in a cup of strong tea or oatmeal.

#### A sweet obsession

Our favorite was the blueberry honey, from Canada. Light in texture with subtle hints of blueberry flavor, it would taste delicious drizzled on pancakes, waffles, or plain yogurt. During our visit, we also tried it mixed with plain Lipton iced tea, and were delightfully hooked.

#### One size fits all

Okinawa YOHO carries their 5 flavors of honey in sizes starting at 150 grams (about 2/3 cup) and up, so there's a size to fit every household and budget, with more savings in the larger sizes. We even scored a couple jars at 10% off because the bottom was beginning to crystallize--easy to fix in a hot water bath on the stovetop (not in the microwave--the plastic will quickly melt).



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# **Dive Update**

### **Calmer Waters**

**\( \)** s typhoon season starts to wrap up, we return to calmer waters for the next few months, while the water is still warm and the diving is some of the best seen in Okinawa year round. October and November usually give us calm seas to enjoy diving

before the colder weather of winter really kicks in.



Now is the time of year to rack up that dive count and enjoy the water and explore the islands around Okinawa. A common question we see from newer divers is, should I just get out and dive more or should I take more classes? Do I really need to have all these specialty courses and will they make me a better diver? To answer these questions, there is a proper mix of classes and

diving that will increase your diving ability and comfort. Many of the specialties offered such as boat diver and night diver are generally a complete waste of time and money and will do nothing to increase your diving ability. You are better off just booking a boat dive or tagging along with some experienced buddies on a night dive. Other classes such as rescue diver will do wonders for your diving and comfort level. Nitrox diver will allow you to extend your time underwater and serves as good start into more advanced levels of diving.

If you have particular issues with your diving, such as using your air too quickly or poor buoyancy control than a class to specifically address these issues with a dive pro is a great idea. A key point here though, is that good buoyancy control should have been taught to you in your basic class so if that is the problem changing instructors may be in order. The most important thing is to meet with your instructor before committing to the course and ensure that your particular problems and training goals will be addressed. Custom classes and training schedules can be arranged with the dive pros at Reef Encounters to suit any schedule or diving goal. Whether your diving aims include being an instructor, exploring the deep wrecks on decompression dives or just getting more comfortable on your reef dives at Sunabe seawall the pros at Reef Encounters can develop a training plan and class to meet your needs.

Remember you learn to dive by diving so getting out and enjoying the ocean is the most important part of your development as a diver. The more you dive the more you will enjoy it!!

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# Weird and Wenderful Japan

### Tourist Killed in Turkey

\* A Japanese female tourist was stabbed to death in Turkey and her friend seriously injured. The two women were studying at Niigata University. So far there is no clue as to the motive or location of the assailants. There's no evidence yet that it was linked to Tokyo being awared the Olympic Games.

### **Tokyo Awarded Olympics**



\* Beating off competition from Istanbul and Madrid as well as radiation worries about Fukushima, Tokyo has been awarded the 2020 Olympic Games.

The last Summer Olympic Games was held in Tokyo in 1964. Even though Tokyo is pledging to hold the games at a lower cost than other bids, it has still attracted criticism that it's too expensive to host in these difficult economic times.

### **Tornados**

\* In early September tornados hit Eastern Japan, tearing roofs off buildings and injuring several people. Many homes also lost power. In all, more than 100 homes were damaged or destroyed and over 70 people were injured.

### Tiger donates 100,000 yen

\* A man dressed in a cloak and tiger mask donated 100,000 yen to an elementary school in Chiba that was hit by a tornado. He arrived on a bicycle and handed a book to the staff. The staff later found the book contained 100,000 yen in 500 yen coins.

### Fukushima Problems Continue

\* TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) is continuing to struggle with storage of the contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant. There have been reports of the storage bins that hold the contaminated water on site leaking and in early September, Japan's nuclear agency said contaminated water may have to be released into the ocean. That's in addition to water that already is suspected to have leaked.

### Solitaire Addiciton?

\* The Secretary General of the Osaka Board of Elections had his pay docked by 2 months after a whistleblower reported him for playing solitaire during worktime. After an investigation it was discovered he had spent over 281 hours playing solitaire in one year!

### **Hottest Summer Ever!**

\*This summer has officially been recognized as the hottest ever for Western Japan. The temperature hit a record 41 degrees in Kochi in August. Over 54,000 people were admitted to hospital suffering from heatstroke during the summer period with 87 fatalities. Eastern Japan was also hot with temperatures on average 1.1 degrees C higher than average.

### **Bird Poop Stops Traffic!**

\* Traffic in Nagano was bought to a halt when 25,000 traffic signals stopped working. The cause? A large number of birds defecating on wires in a substation that caused a short circuit!

# In the mood

Doole

Originally from
China, these thin, curly
wheat noodles have been in Japan
only for about 50 years. Noodles are
placed in a bowl of meat- or fish-based
broth and are often topped with seaweed,
bean sprouts, sliced pork, green onions, and
even hard-boiled eggs. Because there are so
many ramen shops in Japan and on island,
they compete for customers' attention by
adding innovative broth flavors, including tomato ramen at Ramen Kameya
or rich "Black Monster" ramen at
Arashi (pictured).



Okinawa soba's
light, curly noodles differ
from mainland's straight, brown
buckwheat soba. Like ramen, they're
made of wheat, but thicker, flat, and
served in a fish or meat broth (usually
pork), and garnished with green onions,
red pickled ginger, pork belly, and sometimes a white and pink slice of kamoboko,
or fish cake, made from pureed and
steamed white fish. Pictured: Okinawa soba from Miyagi Soba
in Sunabe.



Check the location of all the restaurants on Google Maps here: http://tiny.cc/okinoodles

Second in popularity only to white rice, Japanese noodles are versatile enough to take on other ingredients' flavors, and to stand out as a main course. But what's the difference between ramen and udon? Soba and yakisoba? We break down five different, delicious noodle dishes, and where to find them on island.

# Udon

Thicker than ramen
or soba, these big wheat
noodles are boiled just until soft
and slightly chewy. They're traditionally served as kake udon, hot noodles in
a light broth made from soy sauce, dashi
(fish stock), and mirin (rice wine), and topped
with scallions. Slurp them "as is" or add some
fried tempura for a more filling meal. The
noodles can also be served cold without
broth (zaru) or with hot broth (oroshishoyu). Pictured: kake soba from
Marugame Seimen.

Noodles aren't just for soups in Japan.
Popular at cook outs and festivals, yakisoba, meaning "grilled noodles," are cooked in a savory soybased sauce. Other ingredients are added to fill out this dish, including meat (usually pork in Okinawa), and vegetables, such as onions, cabbage, and carrots. Pictured: yummy yakisoba from Kami Sushi.



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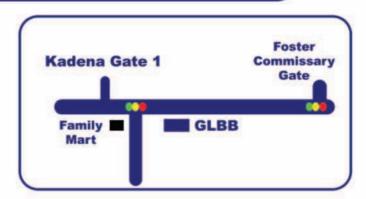


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# **Restaurant Review**



### Ramen Kameya

by Melissa Nazario

Tomato ramen and sushi distinguish this restaurant from typical ramen shops--but how does it measure up?

pend enough time going out to eat in Okinawa, and you'll start to notice how fiercely local restaurants compete for customers' patronage. This is true especially of ramen shops. Because their menu offerings are mostly limited to noodles, they must get creative with seasonal ingredients and novel flavors.



### Tomato Ramen: Is it like the canned stuff?

Ramen Kameya, which opened last year in Okinawa City, has caught a lot of attention with its tomato ramen soup. Admittedly, I was hesitant to try this new take on a favorite, wondering how close it'd come to canned tomato soup, which I don't like. But the soup's flavor did not disappoint—the reddish broth was tasty and slightly acidic, with just hints of tomato. The garnish of powdered parmesan cheese, though not as good as real parmesan would've been, complemented the soup's delicate flavor. Lots of wheat noodles, a couple slices of pork, some greens, sprouts, and small chunks of tomato complete the dish.

### More than noodles

Although Kameya's menu is small, it offers some distinct items, including its own version of qyoza (grilled dumplings), filled with vegetables instead of pork or other meat. If you do try them, though, be sure to bring some breath mints or gum for after the meal—they're quite oniony. Also available as a side is a plate of nigiri sushi, topped with shrimp, salmon, tamago (eqq) and other fish, which were fresh and tasty. We didn't care for the Japanese curry with chunks of vegetables—it was flavorful, to be sure,

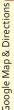


just different from what we were used to. At this time, ramen sets with sides of white or fried rice, sushi, gyoza, and curry are available, but as with many ramen shops, the soup can't be packed for carry out orders. Still, it's worthwhile to dine in and try Ramen Kameya's tomato ramen, even to just say you've tried it. On cooler, rainy days, it's especially satisfying.

Hours: 11:00 am to 10:00 pm

Yen only

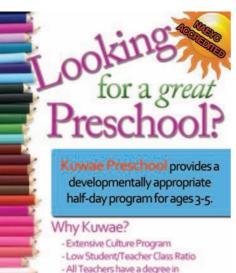
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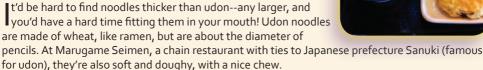


# **Restaurant Review**

by Melissa Nazario

# **Marugame Seimen Udon Restaurant**

These udon are the newest to appear on Highway 58. With their generous seating, tasty noodles and tempura, and great value, we think they'll last a while.





#### What to eat

If you're new to udon, try the basic kake bowl—hot noodles in a light, savory broth, made from soy and dashi (a soup base made from fish, which also flavors miso soup and other Japanese dishes). The broth for kake udon is in a dispenser after you pay at the register. Scallions and tempura flakes, located at the self-service water station, complete this dish. On a hot day, you might want to try the noodles cold, called zaru, with a side of hot broth--the staff will ask if you want them hot or cold. If you're feeling adventurous, there are other flavors to try, including curry udon, with a thicker, slightly spicy Japanese curry broth and small chunks of pork. We liked the curry udon a lot; the broth was a little thicker, but not nearly as much as the gravy you'd find at Coco's Curry. We weren't brave enough for the kamatama udon, which includes a raw egg that is just slightly cooked in the broth, or the mentai kamatama udon, with raw egg and fish eggs.

### Tempura á la carte

Marugame Seimen is set up cafeteria style: first order the type of udon you want, then slide your tray along and choose different á la carte tempura items or rice balls to eat with the noodles. We recommend the mound of fried onions, a Japanese take on the onion loaf at American chain restaurants. The shrimp and pumpkin tempura were tasty, especially dipped in broth. As with most fried food, the longer it sits, the soggier it gets, so keep an eye out for when the staff put out freshly cooked choices.

The prices at Marugame Seimen are exceptionally good; two people can eat for about ¥1200, depending on appetite. It's no wonder the restaurants stay pretty busy. We recommend getting the medium sized udon bowl if you plan on eating tempura--the large is too much. In fact, while it may not seem like a lot of food at first, the noodles and tempura are quite filling.

### Hours: 7:30 am to 11:00 pm

Yen only

www.marugame-seimen.jp





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