

Language:

English



Enjoying “donburi” in Tokyo: a dish with a 300-year history 【PR】

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A donburi is a bowl of meat, fish, vegetables or other ingredients served on a bed of rice seasoned with a sauce. On the surface, it's a simple dish, but the huge range of different toppings and seasonings makes for endless possible variations. Tokyo, as the capital of Japan, has restaurants serving donburi from all over the country, and Tokyo Metropolitan Government places a strong emphasis on food hygiene. We invite you explore Tokyo's wide variety of donburi, from traditional recipes passed down through the years to new creations.

There are no rules about what toppings you can put on a donburi: the possibilities are endless



Kaisendon: raw seafood on a bed of rice with soy or tare sauce

Donburi — meat, fish, vegetables and other ingredients served on a bed of rice — are regarded as folk cuisine.

The origins of donburi in Japan are said to lie in hohan, a dish of rice with toppings and soup that was eaten in the days of the shoguns. The huge variety of donburi we see today were developed over the last 300 years or so.

The attraction of donburi is their simplicity, with meat, fish or other ingredients and rice served in a single bowl, and their variety, with so many different combinations of toppings.

Typical donburi include unadon (with eel), tendon (tempura), gyudon (beef), oyakodon (chicken and egg), katsudon (breaded pork cutlet and egg), and kaisendon (seafood). There are also recipes that incorporate foreign cuisine such as sutekidon (steak), rosutobifudon (roast beef), and mabodon (mapo tofu), and some restaurants even serve donburi whose presentation represents the landmark Skytree broadcasting tower. Wherever you go in Tokyo, you are sure to find donburi with unique flavors and styles.

*1: There are many different theories about the origins of donburi.

Key points when searching for great donburi are “casual dining” and “toppings”.



Gyudon: beef and onion braised in soy sauce and sugar and served on a bed of rice

To enjoy great donburi in Tokyo, we recommend you select a restaurant on the basis of two key points: “casual dining” and “toppings”.

If you like a casual atmosphere, why not choose a fast food restaurant? Tokyo has many 24-hour fast food chains that offer a wide variety of donburi, including gyudon (beef) and katsudon, which is topped with a breaded pork cutlet braised with onion and beaten eggs.

Take gyudon: besides the standard gyudon, every fast food chain offers different versions, including some with cheese or kimchi. It's a good idea to check the location of the restaurant in advance, but if you memorize the name and signboard, you'll probably spot one as you walk around the streets. One of the attractions of this style of restaurant is that you can enjoy a fuss-free meal wherever and whenever you like.



Fukagawadon was originally a fast food dish eaten by fishermen on their boats

You can also choose a restaurant by topping. Fukagawadon, for example, is made of little-neck clams and negi onions, braised in miso and served on a bed of rice, and is a local specialty said to have originated among the fishermen in Fukagawa (the modern-day Koto City area of Tokyo), where shellfish were once caught.

Many restaurants in Koto City today serve Fukagawadon, and there are many variations on the basic recipe, with some restaurants adding deep-fried tofu, eggs or other toppings, or pouring the braising liquor over the rice, so it's fun to try different versions.

You can also enjoy a host of other donburi that have become household favorites in Japan, including tendon, which is said to have originated in Tokyo's Asakusa district, and oyakodon ("parent and child" donburi), topped with chicken and eggs.

*2 There are many different theories about the origins of the tendon.

Enjoying Tokyo cuisine in safety and with peace of mind



Food testing at a Tokyo Metropolitan Government laboratory

We've talked about the many different donburi you can enjoy in Tokyo, but it's also worth mentioning that Tokyo Metropolitan Government monitors and provides guidance on the hygienic handling of food at the distribution stage, which means you can enjoy your gourmet journey of discovery with peace of mind.

Tokyo Metropolitan Government has also established its own voluntary food hygiene certification system, and awards a Tokyo Food Hygiene Meister certification mark exclusively to restaurants that meet strict standards on food poisoning prevention and hygiene management. You could also use this mark as a way of choosing a restaurant.



The Tokyo Food Hygiene Meister certification mark

Donburi encapsulate Japan's highly diverse food culture. Have fun exploring its many different aspects!