

SAN JOSE  
OBON  
HOME  
EAT | PLAY | DANCE  
2020

COOKBOOK  
FAVORITE FOODS OF  
YESTERYEAR



SAN JOSE  
BUDDHIST CHURCH  
BETSUIN

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**At the “old normal” OBON Festival  
these booths are also working!**

- ▶ **Tempura** (yummy fried vegetables in tempura batter)
- ▶ **Imagawa-yaki** (sweetened azuki bean filling inside in a crispy outside, soft inside pancake-like grilled pancake)
- ▶ **Nigiri Sushi** (sushi rice with raw fish on top)
- ▶ **Inari sushi** (specially seasoned sushi rice tucked into seasoned tofu wraps)
- ▶ **Maki Sushi** (sushi rice wrapped around seasoned vegetables and with nori-paper wrapped around the outside)
- ▶ **Chirashi Sushi** (seasoned ingredients mixed into sushi rice)
- ▶ **Boba Drinks, Beer Garden** (locally, Japantown made Gordon Biersch Beer & Cider), **Sake, Soda, Water, Ramen.**



# COOKBOOK

## FAVORITE FOODS OF YESTERYEAR

EAT | PLAY | DANCE

**If you are like us, you appreciate the opportunity to have someone who is a great chef cook for you rather than spend the years and hours of work it took for the great chef to become the great chef.**

### HOWEVER~

There are foods that we enjoy every year at, say San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin's OBON festival that you look forward to no matter who is behind the tongs, spatulas, fryers, pots, rollers and grills. These are community foods. They are foods this special community grew up with. There are always wonderful stories; reminiscences and jokes that come along with community food.

We hope that you will enjoy this version of OBON FOOD 2020 as we work in collaboration in the COVID-19 pandemic universe. We hope you enjoy the stories and recipes that follow. Some, you'll see again at future Obon festivals and some you may not. They will stay in the past and new community foods and crews of cooks will begin new festival booths, sharing food of the day. Whatever happens, just know that all the food at OBON is prepared by hundreds of volunteers over hundreds of hours and decades of recipe sharing.

You'll see some of the actual poundage of ingredients, bags, pallets, pounds, gallons used and a story or historical context and then - an adjusted recipe that you can try at home!

We hope you enjoy the experience!







# CORN on THE COB

**Of course! It's easy.**

**Recipe:**

Husk corn. Put corn in boiling water. Slather on butter, wrap in parchment paper or put on a plate - And Eat!

We are including this because, for Obon, pallets of corn are picked from the fields before 5am that day, boxed and driven down to San Jose where volunteers gather around two eight foot tables to husk and sort the corn. The photo shows the baskets that were created to fit into the vats of boiling water. 10 minutes later, the baskets are hauled out and volunteers take the hot corn and roll them through a tray of melted butter. It's ready for "plating".

**The pallets are delivered in the early morning for each day of Obon.**

Corn on the Cob at home is easy, but you really have to start with fresh corn cobs still in their husks. You have to boil them according to the number of cobs you have in the pot and be sure to butter them and salt (if you like) when they are hot. For real Obon goodness, pick them up with parchment or brown paper and eat right away.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Obon has been zero waste for many years now, but there was a steep learning curve for the process of getting the husks out of the festival to the recycling containers out on the street!

Can you smell the BBQ? **Yes!** So can we!

#### Ingredients:

2 pounds beef, sliced thin sukiyaki-style  
2 cups soy sauce  
2 cups granulated sugar  
1/4 cup white wine such as a Chablis, could also use sake or mirin  
(if using mirin, reduce sugar by 1/4 cup)  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 tsp ginger, minced

1 tsp lemon juice (or 2 round slices fresh lemon, skin on, 1/4 inch thick)  
2 green bell peppers, seeded and cut into 1 inch pieces  
1 medium yellow onion, cut into 1 inch pieces  
Bamboo skewers

#### Directions:

- ▶ Put sugar and soy sauce in a small pan and turn heat to low. Stir until sugar is melted then remove from heat.
- ▶ Allow to cool.
- ▶ Add wine, garlic, ginger, and lemon juice, and stir to combine
- ▶ Add beef to the marinade. Stir to make sure all the beef is in contact with the marinade and none of it is sticking together.

- ▶ Place marinating meat in the refrigerator Allow to marinate for at least 1 hour, but optimally, overnight. For Obon, the meat marinates for a few days.

- ▶ When you put the meat in to marinate, put your skewers in water to soak.

- ▶ When the meat is ready, start skewering!

- ▶ Place a piece of bell pepper and a piece or two of onion on the skewer first, then thread the meat on followed by another piece or two of onion and a piece of bell pepper. The vegetables add flavor and help to keep the meat on the skewer while it's cooking.

- ▶ Be careful not to pack the meat too tightly. If it's too tight, the outside will burn before the inside cooks.

- ▶ Skewers can be cooked on the grill for that authentic Obon smokiness, or, alternatively, on a grill pan on the stove, or on racks in an oven under the broiler. Whatever method is used, keep an eye on them. The high sugar content means they burn easily.

For vegetarians, hearty mushrooms such as shiitake or king oyster mushrooms can be substituted for the beef. Marinate for less time, maybe 1-3 hours. Skewer and cook as above.



## BY THE NUMBERS!

**2,400** lbs of beef  
**3,200** lbs of sugar  
**200** gallons of soy sauce  
**650** pounds of onions  
**825** lbs of peppers  
**72** liters of sake  
**9** lbs of ginger  
**60** cloves of garlic



# CHICKEN TERIYAKI

## BY THE NUMBERS!

**6,700** lbs of chicken  
**8,750** lbs of sugar  
**350** gallons of soy sauce  
**1,400** liters of white wine  
**90** liters of sake  
**21** lbs of ginger  
**41** lbs of garlic

### Ingredients:

3-4 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (at Obon it's quarters, but any pieces work)  
1 cup soy sauce  
3/4 cup + 2 Tablespoons sugar  
6 cloves garlic, minced  
1 Tablespoon minced ginger  
1 cup white wine such as a Chablis, could also use sake or mirin (if using mirin, reduce sugar to only 1/4 cup total)

### Directions:

- ▶ Put sugar and soy sauce in a small pan and turn heat to low. Stir until sugar is melted then remove from heat.
- ▶ Allow to cool
- ▶ Add wine, garlic, and ginger, and stir to combine
- ▶ Add chicken to the marinade. Stir to make sure all the chicken is in contact with the marinade
- ▶ Place marinating meat in the refrigerator. Allow to marinate for at least one hour but optimally, overnight. Obon usually marinates for three days
- ▶ After marinading, the chicken can be cooked on the grill for that authentic Obon smokiness, or, alternatively, on a grill pan on the stove, or on racks in the oven under the broiler

***If you want to bake rather than broil the chicken in the oven (to cut down on the chances of setting off a smoke alarm), here's what we tried.***

- ▶ *Preheat oven to 400 F and line a rimmed sheet pan with foil. Once the oven has come to temperature, place the chicken on the foil lined tray, skin side down. Put it in the oven for about 20 minutes.*
- ▶ *Check the chicken after 20 minutes and flip the chicken to skin side up. Give it another 10 minutes.*
- ▶ *After the 10 minutes has elapsed, check the chicken to see if it's cooked through. We had both bone-in thighs and drumettes on the same tray and they were all well cooked at this point.*
- ▶ *Turn the oven to broil and leave the oven door cracked open just a little to let steam escape. Broil for 3-5 minutes for color.*

Thirty years ago, and for years before that, women from the Buddhist Women's Association at the Betsuin used to make this tsukemono (pickles) from donated nappa cabbage that came from the fields of temple members who were farmers. Sometimes, people would bring what they grew in their backyards.

The nappa would be cut in half or quartered and put in huge 32 gallon tubs with layers of salt between them and sometimes whole red peppers (togarashi). Sometimes, the women were so small, that they needed a taller person to reach the bottom of the barrel. They were always, though, strong enough to pull out the tsukemono, take it into the kitchen to rise it and cut it up.

The barrels were started on Friday and refilled on Saturday. After being cut into bite sized pieces, the tsukemono was packed into small paper cups that you sometimes see used for sampling or for ketchup. These cups of tsukemono were set up in rows on trays for people to take with their Obon food (chicken teriyaki, beef skewers, udon, tempura or anything at all!).

# OLD SCHOOL NAPPA TSUKEMONO

## Ingredients:

1 medium nappa cabbage, 2-3 pounds

1/4 cup kosher salt

A container big enough to hold all the nappa and the liquid from the pickling

A dish or other sturdy, flat object that will fit inside the container as a lid

Something heavy and waterproof to use as a weight

2 tsp dried togarashi (optional)



▶ Cut the nappa into quarters the long way, leaving leaves attached at the root end.

▶ Rinse leaves in cold water.

Put one quarter on your cutting board with the point of the cut sides up. Lift all the leaves but the bottom biggest

▶ one. Scatter salt on top of the leaf, then let the next leaf drop down. Scatter salt on top of that leaf. If using togarashi, scatter a few pieces per leaf along with the salt,

▶ Continue like this until all the leaves of each quarter are salted. You may not need all the salt.

▶ Place salted cabbage in your container and put the lid on top. The lid can be wrapped in muslin cloth if you're using something like a wooden steamer lid.

▶ Put the weight on top of the lid. If you don't have pickling weights, you can wrap rocks in plastic, or fill bottles or a pan with water and use that.

▶ Leave the cabbage for 12-24 hours. The cabbage will wilt and release liquid.

▶ Once the cabbage is pickled to your liking, remove from the container and taste a little. If it's too salty, rinse it out in cold water.

▶ Squeeze out excess liquid and cut into bite sized pieces. Serve as a side dish with gohan (rice) or noodles like udon.

▶ Can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

## Ingredients:

### For dressing

1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup rice vinegar (white vinegar or apple cider vinegar can be substituted)  
2 Tbsp sesame oil  
1/4 cup toasted sesame seeds  
1/4 tsp kosher salt

### For salad

1/2 a green cabbage, shredded  
1/2 a red cabbage, shredded  
1 carrot, julienned or shredded  
1-2 cups cold, cooked chicken, finely shredded  
1 package instant ramen (Sapporo or Top Ramen work well; the ramen broth flavor doesn't matter as only the noodles will be used)  
2 green onions, julienned (optional)

## Directions:

- ▶ Put all dressing ingredients into a small bowl and whisk together until sugar is completely dissolved. Set aside
- ▶ To shred the cabbage, remove the core with a knife and either chop finely, use a vegetable peeler, or use a grater.
- ▶ Add cabbage and carrot to a large bowl and toss to combine
- ▶ Add the dressing and the green onions (optional) and toss again
- ▶ Add chicken. Break ramen noodles into smallish nuggets and scatter over the top of the salad.

This is a good make-ahead recipe. It tastes good the day it's made, but it tastes even better the next day. The flavors permeate the cabbage and make it tastier without harming the crispy texture. If you do make this ahead, leave the ramen out and add just before serving if you want crunchy noodles. Oddly, they taste good soggy too, so if you forget and add them in, don't worry.

- ▶ This ratio of greens to dressing results in a lightly dressed salad. If you want stronger flavor on the day it's made, you can reduce the amount of greens or double the dressing quantity. Our Obon used to use teriyaki chicken breast for this salad, but any cold, cooked chicken will work - left over rotisserie, BBQ, roast chicken...

- ▶ If you don't feel like shredding cabbage and carrots, a pre-packaged coleslaw mix without dressing makes a good alternative.

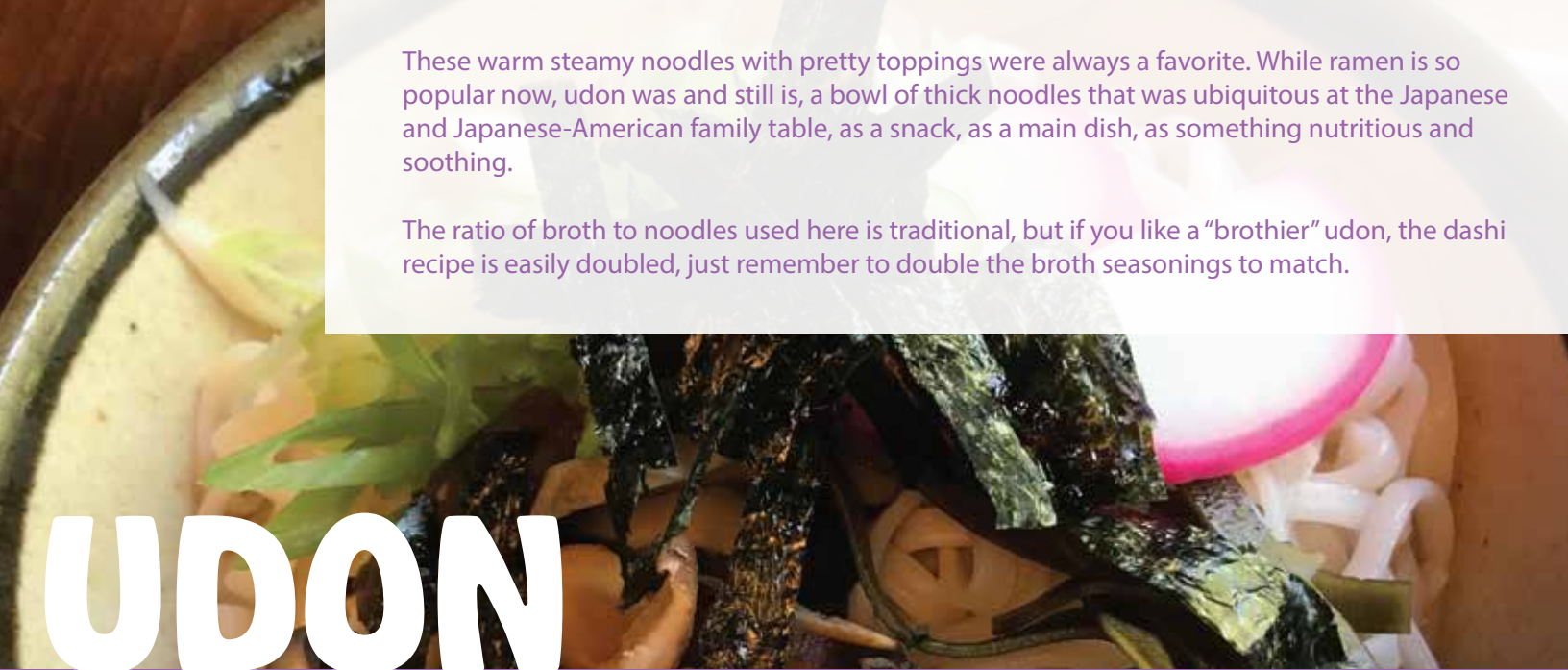
To make this vegetarian, leave out the chicken above.

# RAMEN CHICKEN SALAD



This is a recipe from the past. Many times, food booths are run by groups within the Betsuin who have expertise or ideas for foods that they enjoy at home and that they think may be doable for large numbers of people. As the volunteers change, different food booths are created and some go away. This is one that is easily recreated that we hope you will enjoy!





These warm steamy noodles with pretty toppings were always a favorite. While ramen is so popular now, udon was and still is, a bowl of thick noodles that was ubiquitous at the Japanese and Japanese-American family table, as a snack, as a main dish, as something nutritious and soothing.

The ratio of broth to noodles used here is traditional, but if you like a “brothier” udon, the dashi recipe is easily doubled, just remember to double the broth seasonings to match.

# UDON

## Ingredients:

**400g dry udon noodles**  
(Japanese udon usually come bundled in 100g servings)

### For the dashi (stock)

1 4”x4” piece of dried kombu  
(kelp for stock)  
4-5 large dried shiitake mushrooms  
5 cups water

### For the broth

4 cups dashi (made with ingredients above)  
1 1/2 Tbsp soy sauce  
1 Tbsp mirin  
1/2 Tbsp kosher salt

### Toppings

2-3 green onions, chopped  
Shiitake from making the dashi, sliced  
Kombu from making the dashi, julienned  
Nori flakes or strips  
Kamaboko, cut into half moon slices  
Shichimi (Japanese 7 spice powder), for serving

## Directions:

- ▶ Make the dashi by putting the water, shiitake, and kombu in a pot and setting it over medium low heat. The kombu may have white stuff on it. Don’t wash that off. It’s full of umami. If you see anything brownish on it, wipe it off with a damp towel.
- ▶ Just before it comes to a boil, remove the kombu, but leave the shiitake.
- ▶ Simmer for 15 minutes. The shiitake should be fully rehydrated.
- ▶ Remove the shiitake. When the shiitake and kombu are cool enough to handle, squeeze out the shiitake and add any resulting liquid back into the dashi. Slice the shiitake and julienne the kombu. Set aside.
- ▶ Start a large pot of water for boiling the udon. Cook the noodles to package directions and drain.
- ▶ Make the broth by adding soy sauce, mirin, and salt to the dashi and simmering for 2-3 minutes.
- ▶ Place the hot udon in serving bowls and pour hot broth over them. Top with reserved shiitake and kombu, plus green onion and kamaboko slices, with nori over the top.
- ▶ Season with shichimi to taste and serve with a side of tsukemono or sunomono.

To make this completely vegetarian, leave out the kamaboko.

Other topping suggestions include egg, tempura, teriyaki beef, teriyaki chicken, seasoned aburaage (kitsune udon), tenkasu (the leftover bits from making tempura, tanuki udon), wakame...pretty much whatever you think would taste good.

# STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

## Directions:

- ▶ Start with the strawberries. Hull them (remove the green part), then halve or quarter them depending on their size.
  - ▶ Put the strawberries in a bowl. Scatter the sugar on top and mix to distribute the sugar evenly. If using the vanilla, add it to the bowl and mix again.
  - ▶ Set the strawberries aside and let them sit for at least 30 minutes. They will begin to release liquid and form a sort of syrup of their own juices.
  - ▶ Next, the cake. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a standard, 12 cup muffin tin or 8x8 baking dish.
  - ▶ In a large bowl mix all of the dry ingredients (flour, sugar, baking soda and salt), mix well.
  - ▶ Make 3 depressions in your dry ingredients – two small, one larger. Pour vinegar in one small depression, vanilla in the second, and the vegetable oil in the third, larger, depression.
  - ▶ Pour the cup of water over all. Mix until smooth. It will be a very loose batter, sort of like pancake batter.
  - ▶ Fill each muffin depression about 3/4 full with batter, or pour everything into your greased 8x8 baking dish.
  - ▶ Place on middle rack of oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes for cupcakes and 30-35 minutes for the large cake. Be sure to check with a toothpick in the center of the cake (or cupcakes) to make sure it comes out clean. Each oven bakes at different rates, adjust baking times accordingly.
  - ▶ When ready, remove from oven, allow to cool for a minute or two then remove from tin and place on cooling rack.
- When cooled:**
- ▶ For the large cake: cut into cubes and pile into dishes. Top with strawberries and creamy topping of choice.
  - ▶ For cupcakes: cut cupcakes in half horizontally and place in dishes, top with strawberries and creamy topping of choice.

## Ingredients:

### For the strawberries

2 pints strawberries, washed and dried  
1/4 cup white sugar (you want white to preserve the color)  
1/4 tsp vanilla (optional)

### For the cake Dry

1 1/2 cups flour (all-purpose)

1 cup white sugar  
1 tsp baking soda (make sure your baking soda is fresh)  
1/2 tsp salt

### Wet

1 tsp white vinegar  
1 tsp pure vanilla extract  
5 Tbsp liquid vegetable oil (this can also be measured 1/4 cup + 1 Tbsp)  
1 cup water

1 standard 12 cup muffin tin OR 8x8 baking dish

### To serve

Creamy topping of choice (canned whipped topping is traditional at Obon, but you could use actual whipped cream, or Greek yogurt, or, vanilla ice cream, or plain cream, or...)

# ROOT BEER FLOAT



## Ingredients:

8-12 oz root beer per serving (mini cans are 7.5 oz, but work just fine)  
1 scoop vanilla ice cream per serving  
Crushed ice (optional)

## Directions:

If using ice, add ice to a tall glass. Pour in cold root beer.

▶ A&W was the classic choice, but Mug, Barq's, basically any root beer you like the taste of will work.

▶ Float a scoop of ice cream on top of the soda (and ice, if using).

▶ Serve with a spoon and a straw.

▶ Putting the ice cream in after the soda keeps the soda clearer. Putting the ice cream in before pouring the soda creates a creamy beverage. Both are delicious. It's really just a matter of preference.

You know that this is from history in the USA because root beer is virtually unknown in Japan. Lotus Preschool of the SJ Buddhist Church Betsuin, used to have a root beer float booth. That changed a few years ago to a pearl tea drink, plus mocha ice booth which is very popular during the hot Obon season! We thought we'd go back to the mid-1980's just for this cookbook and relive those root beer days!

For a fun twist, or if you want to update this to a Japanese version, use melon flavored Japanese soda to make a melon soda, or cola for a cola float! Coca Cola is well known in Japan!



# VOLUNTEERS LUNCH



This practice started because Obon preparation goes on for many days. It takes weeks actually. But because people cooking rice have often stayed up all night and others making other food, sushi, beef, chicken, omanju and more, do not get to eat lunch before they go out to their booths to work again, the ministers wives of yesteryear decided to make musubi or onigiri (rice balls) and serve them with tsukemono.

People started bringing different items to eat, and so two ministers' wives (okusan), already advisors for various organizations within the church, thought that they might work with local grocery stores (Santo Market mainly) and get bread, some cold cuts, vegetable fixings for cold sandwiches, cut up some watermelons and have chips, tea and water available for volunteers to be served in the time between finished preparations and opening the festival.

This became known as 'okusan's lunch' and then 'volunteers lunch'. For some volunteers, it is the **ONLY** time during the year that they eat cold cuts on white bread sandwiches!

The tradition continues. Three to four watermelons a day are sliced up and put in large tubs. Cold cuts (turkey, bologna, ham) and sliced cheese (Swiss, American, cheddar), sliced fresh tomatoes, fresh lettuce leaves, bowls of mayonnaise, bottles of mustard, fresh bread and bowls of bread and butter pickles are placed on two rows of two-eight foot tables end to end are set-up for a serve yourself lunch. There are always many oversized bags of potato chips, tortilla chips, and all sorts of seasoned chips that are ordered just for these two days of the festival. Ministers' families help slice, layout and serve with help from friends. And now, it's mainly the Santo Market family that is there to help! Paper plates, napkins, loaves of sliced bread and trays of food as they are emptied are whisked away and replenished.

It's fun and has become a way to say a small 'thank you' to everyone who has worked since the wee hours of the morning

And often, we have to turn away visitors who want to pay for the sandwiches, saying we're sorry, but this is just for volunteers!



**We hope you enjoyed this cookbook.  
We look forward to seeing you in  
person next year!**

**Stay Safe & Be Well  
Namo Amida Butsu**



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