



A Glimpse of Sendai

exploring student life in japan part 3



“We talked about my university, my laboratory and the dormitory I stay in the previous articles. This time, I would like to lead you to the heaven of food. In this session, we will talk about what is so special about Sendai’s food and what kind of food do I like and what kind of food do I always make while staying here in Sendai.”

Sendai’s Gourmet Enjoy the Taste of Local Cuisine

What will you think of when you hear the phrase “Japanese food”? Famous names like sushi, or ramen noodles, I bet? One thing I would like to tell you here is that Japanese food is not just these two things. Just like in Malaysia, different places serve different kinds of local food. In Sendai, local cuisine includes dishes such as 牛タン焼き (*gyuutan yaki*) and ずんだ (*zunda*).

ずんだ (*zunda*) is a soy bean paste that is very famous in Sendai, used in making traditional sweets. For example, we have ずんだ餅 (*zunda mochi*), that is お餅 (*omochi*) – a kind of traditional sweet made of glutinous rice eaten with *zunda* paste, as shown in the photo. Another thing you should try in Sendai is the ずんだシェイク (*zunda shake*). You can get it at the Sendai station for 290 yen. Besides these, you can also try out even more *zunda*-based dishes like ずんだ大福 (*zunda daifuku* – a glutinous rice sweet with *zunda* paste filling), *zunda* pudding etc.

The next one to recommend to those who want to come to Sendai is the 牛タン焼き (*gyuutan yaki*). *Gyuutan* is cow’s tongue, and the culture of eating cow’s tongue came from the West. It is said that *gyuutan yaki* is created by a Japanese man named 佐野啓四郎 (Keishirou Sano) who was the master of a 焼き鳥 (*yakitori* – grilled chicken skewers) restaurant. As grilled chicken and beef are starting to feel repetitive, he decided to try to make something new. *Gyuutan* is a must-try in Sendai, so make sure to put it on your gourmet bucket list now!

Moving on, there is another special cuisine that is only found in Sendai, called マーボー焼きそば (*maaboo yakisoba*). Most of you have probably heard of マーボー豆腐 (*maaboo doufu* – a Chinese tofu cuisine cooked with spicy sauce) and 焼きそば (*yakisoba* – basically, Japanese fried noodles) before. *Maaboo yakisoba* is the fusion of these two cuisines. You can get *maaboo yakisoba* in many restaurants in Sendai, as well as even from convenience stores like 7-Eleven!



Zunda mochi



Zunda shake



Maaboo yakisoba



Gyuutan yaki

My Favorite Sendai Restaurants



1. 煮干しラーメン (niboshi ramen) 2. The つけ麺 (tsukemen) in Menya Date. 3. The curry set in Raj.

In the previous section, I have introduced to you some of the foods that are famous in Sendai. Here, I'd like to show two Sendai restaurants that I really like.

First of all is a ramen restaurant called 千極煮干 (Senkyoku Niboshi). I'm a big fan of ramen, and I can say this is a great restaurant that's affordable, and close to where I stay. The ramen is served in a thick 煮干し (niboshi - small dried sardine fish) soup with チャーシュー (char siew/roasted pork). The fish soup is a signature standout, as most ramen is usually served in a (thick) pork soup or a (lighter) soy sauce soup. Speaking of char siew, I can say that 麵屋伊達 (Menya Date) is the best ramen shop in Sendai that serves the most delicious char siew I can find.

There's one more restaurant that I like named Raj, an Indian restaurant near my university. The food served there is mainly Indian curry, different types of naan, and also some side dishes like tandoori chicken. I always go there with my Japanese lab-mates. Among the many kinds of curry on the menu, most of my friends prefer the butter chicken curry, while I tend to prefer the set menu that costs 990 yen (including tax). The set menu contains 3 kinds of curries, a naan, some salad and a piece of tandoori chicken. The chicken is my favorite because the meat is tender and juicy. There are many kinds of curry to choose for the set menu, but my favorites are the spinach curry, butter chicken curry and the seafood curry.

The Birth of a Little Cook?

Frankly speaking, I have never tried to cook by myself when I was in Malaysia, since I have my mum whom I always relied to for food. When I was studying in Malaysia, we were not allowed to cook in the dormitory. This changed after I came to Japan as food here is usually delicious, but pricey. While my cooking is nowhere as good as my mum's, I'd like to show you the kind of food I cook for myself in Japan.

In Japan, it's sometimes difficult to get ingredients that we always use in Malaysia to make local dishes. But there's no need to worry. When there is a will, there is a way. That's how I started to cook too.

The food that I've always longed to eat are Malaysian dishes and some home cooking. When talking about Malaysian food, one can't forget nasi lemak, bak kut teh, and chicken rice!

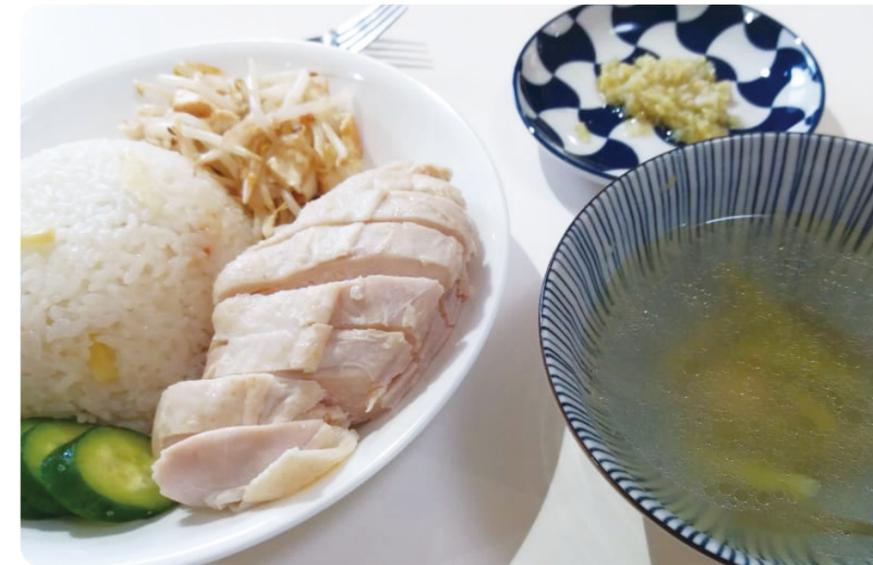
I once longed for nasi lemak so much I started to search for the ingredients to make it in Sendai, and also asked my Malaysian friends online where I can buy said ingredients. Fortunately, I managed to find a halal shop that sells Indonesian sambal, sweet soy sauce and coconut milk. I even got some pandan leaves and seafood sambal sauce from an online store called Baticrom. However, since jasmine rice is expensive, I use Japanese rice instead. The total I spent for the ingredients for nasi lemak is at around 1500 yen, which includes the seafood sambal on the top left that can be shared with about 3 to 4 people. I always make a lot of it at once because it is cheaper and can be shared with my friends.



Nasi lemak



Bak kut teh



Hainanese chicken rice

The next dish on the list is the bak kut teh. I brought my own bak kut teh herb bags from Malaysia, and recently found that I can easily buy more from Taobao! Besides making the bak kut teh soup itself, I recommend that it should be eaten with yam rice. Making the rice is not that difficult - you just have to stir fry some rice with dried prawns and yam, and add sweet soy sauce and oyster sauce. Getting the yam is the slightly more difficult part, and taro can be a substitute on the off chance yam isn't available. To be quite honest, I couldn't pull off this dish well at first, but after many tries I've gotten joking suggestions to start a restaurant. LOL. I spend around 2000 yen to make a large pot of bak kut teh, with enough rice for 5-6 people.

Next, let me introduce to you my favorite dish, Hainanese chicken rice! I like this dish very much, as it's a great work-

out dish. I got the recipe online, and the ingredients are all simple and easy to get from any Sendai supermarket. What you need is ginger, spring onions, onions, rice, cucumbers and white chicken meat. I always serve it with soup and ginger paste too. The paste is very easy to make - blend some onion and ginger, and then add vinegar, salt and sesame oil. You can get the recipe online very easily. A serving for three costs 1,500 yen, and that includes a serving of bean sprouts on the side.

Besides these three, I've also tried to make anything that I feel like eating - challenging myself to make these new dishes is really fun. And most importantly, you'd feel really happy whenever you manage to make a new dish that tastes good! Below are some of the foods I've tried to make in my dorm. Feeling hungry yet?



1. Lemon chicken chop 2. Hippari udon from Yamagata - made by mixing udon, canned saba fish and natto 3. Taiwanese grilled king mushroom 4. Honey chicken 5. Oyster sauce lady's fingers with fried anchovies 6. Deep fried egg

That's all about the food I eat in Sendai. If you come to Sendai, please try out the food I recommended above! A word of advice to those who don't cook: learn up if you want to study abroad like I do. You'll find out how amazing cooking is as a hobby, and I'm sure you'll fall in love with it once you begin.

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