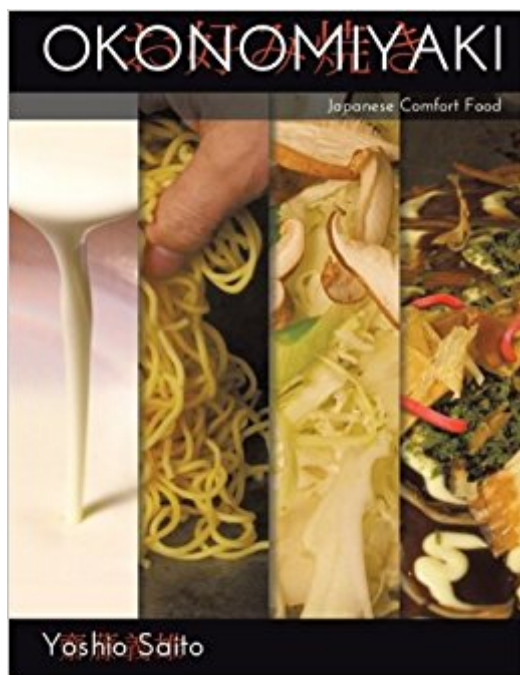


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# Okonomiyaki: Japanese Comfort Food



## Synopsis

For Chef Yoshio Saito, learning to cook traditional Japanese food at his mother's side was a treasured part of his childhood. When she died when he was fourteen, he decided to honor her memory by learning how to cook her recipes and more. In this cookbook, Chef Yoshio, a Tokyo native and trained French/Japanese fusion chef, introduces today's modern home cook to Okonomiyaki, one of the most popular comfort foods in Japan. Okonomiyaki, although difficult to describe, can be likened to a savory pancake or pizza-like dish that is cooked on a griddle. Following on the tail of the popularity of sushi, Okonomiyaki is an exciting dish just becoming known in the United States. It uses a wide range of ingredients, including meat, seafood, vegetables, pasta, and more. When Chef Yoshio walks into an Okonomiyaki restaurant, he always gets the sense that his mother is there, helping to create the wonderful smells. For him, the taste of Okonomiyaki is the taste of home. Gathering his favorite recipes, Chef Yoshio shares his tips for three major regional styles of this comfort food in this cookbook-Hiroshima, Osaka, and Tokyo styles. As well as introducing classic Okonomiyaki dishes, Chef Yoshio shares his creative new dishes that expand the possibilities of Okonomiyaki.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Chef Yoshio Saito learned to cook at his mother's side in Tokyo, cooking his first curry at fourteen, right before his mother's death. Although his traditional father discouraged his passion for cooking, Yoshio persevered, learning classical Japanese and French cooking from his older sister, a student of Miyuki Iida, the Julia Child of Japan.

For those not inclined to read a long review, I'll start with the punchline: this book should be considered indispensable by any fan of this wonderful Japanese dish. I strongly encourage anyone new to Okonomiyaki to start with Osaka (Kansai) style. Those experienced with any given style will find Mr. Saito's book to be an inspiring guide on their trip down the Okonomiyaki rabbit hole! We first looked into Okonomiyaki after a friend from San Diego posted a picture of what turned out to be an Osaka-preparation to her Facebook page without a caption. Being foodies, we couldn't let something as unusual-sounding as a pancake made with shredded cabbage and garnished with shaved dried tuna, pickled ginger, seaweed and a special sauce made specifically for the dish go untried. Though we're happy to try new recipes on our own, given the unusual list of ingredients we decided that our first experience should be with a professionally-prepared dish made by an experienced chef- that would give us a benchmark. Though we live in a large metropolitan area, not a single restaurant seemed to have Okonomiyaki on the menu. A google search yielded one attempt to provide a worldwide list of places serving Okonomiyaki, however. ... and jackpot! The one place listed in our area no longer had it on the menu, but the 85-year-old chef was experienced in making five different styles, and was only too happy to make it to order with a day's warning! After trying a few different styles for inspiration and as a measure of the quality of our own attempts, our friend in San Diego sent a "care package" containing Okonomiyaki flour, Okonomi sauce, tempura bits (Tenkasu) , and shaved bonito flakes (Katsuobushi). We were instantly hooked. It was the night after our first (happily, successful!) attempt at Kansai Okonomiyaki that we found this wonderful guidebook to the broader world of this delicious dish. Our favorite (thus far) is Kansai/Osaka style with pork belly (just ask your supermarket butcher if they don't normally have pork belly on the shelf). We make the dish healthier by trimming all of the fat off of the pork belly and just using the meat (chopped). We find one pound or so of untrimmed pork belly yields enough meat for two Okonomiyaki. If you don't have a Japanese market in your area, you might try eBay and for the flour, Beni Shoga (red pickled ginger), Katsuobushi, Tenkasu, Aonori (seaweed flakes) and Okonomi sauce. We use Kewpie brand mayonnaise (a Japanese favorite) but I think most any high-quality relatively neutral (not sweet) mayonnaise would work well. If you're in a hurry, try using the angel hair shredded cabbage sold in 10 oz bags in many supermarkets for use in making cole slaw. Okonomiyaki is quick and easy-to-make, probably unlike anything you've ever tasted, and almost impossible to describe in terms of other familiar flavors. It instantly became (and remains) our family's favorite comfort food. I'm sure we'll keep coming back to Mr. Saito's book for ideas and inspiration for years to come- it's written with the love, thoughtfulness, creativity, and sense of

culinary adventure that a cooking tradition this wonderful deserves.

I loved this cookbook; I have made several recipes already, and all have turned out wonderfully. I had to order a handful of ingredients online, but I was able to obtain the majority from my local grocery store, which was really helpful for those spur of the moment dinner decisions. I found the cookbook well organized and easy to follow; my only minor complaint is the paucity of photographs. I like to know what my recipe should look like at various stages of preparation, and I like having the final product shown so I can compare my efforts to the master version. But it is a minor complaint, and I am very happy to have added many great recipes to my repertoire. I was so glad to find out that I could make really good, semi-authentic ramen at home with just a little planning. Everyone in my family has loved each meal I've made from the book, which is a miracle in my house.

Wow, just finished the cookbook, my daughter loves Japanese cooking so I had bought it to have a day shopping for the Asian ingredients meaning driving two hours one way to a larger city with an Asian store, another time planning the fresh food meats and vegetables picking out what we wanted to try if it was over emails or the phone, then a day spent cooking for ourselves, followed by a day spent with the rest of our now grown adult family and the little ones making a wide variety on multiple electric fry pans and griddles. Watching the stars and munching out on food, song, and family time. Thank you for the etc med and cheese options to please our family taste buds. We had been looking for some way to increase our recipe base to add more vegetables to our diet, too.

Okonomiyaki is still one of the least-known Japanese foods outside of Japan. This book should help shed a little light. It's funny, quirky, and full of good recipes, and the author is clearly crazy about the food. And the photo of the Boston-style Lobster Okonomiyaki is hilarious. The book is also practical: the author knows that most people who make okonomiyaki at home use a flour mix, and he includes plenty of recipes that begin with the mix. You can then move up to making the batter from scratch, and from there to the graduate-level Hiroshima-style pancake.

What a fun little book! I had no idea that there are so many variations of okonomiyaki, from plain to indulgent. I appreciate Saito's explanations of the regional variations, and his in-depth explanation of cooking technique. I am lucky that I work a few blocks from a good Japanese/Asian seafood and grocery market, and have access to most of the required ingredients. But finding out that there are okonomiyaki batter mixes available makes the dish a practical item in my menu rotation. I don't

understand the Japanese fascination with mayonnaise, but since I'll be making okonomiyaki at home, I can skip the mayonnaise and save a lot of calories. Meanwhile, I have another use for the many cabbages I've received in my organic vegetable deliveries. This is my first Kindle cookbook. I don't know that I'd want a comprehensive cookbook on Kindle, but a small one like this is handy and space-saving.

I am working on making myself into a gourmet cook. My cooking is good now but there is always room for improvement. Now that I am retired, I have the time to evolve.

If you are into Japanese food, this is a lovely book to acquire. One of my favorite food's is okonomiyaki and this book has many different variations on a theme. Okonomiyaki recipes vary by location and Saito takes us to all the variations. The pictures are excellent, the recipes sound delicious. What's more, okonomiyaki is pretty quick to prepare and full of nutrition, so it's great for people with little time.

Great book.

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