**Soba-gome Jiru (Buckwheat Soup)**

Tokushima has its own unique version of savory rice soup, a common dish in Japan. Buckwheat, called soba in Japanese, was an important crop for farmers, since it was difficult to grow rice in the region’s mountainous areas. It is best known as the main ingredient in soba noodles but the grain is also used to make *soba-gome jiru.* Buckwheat kernels are boiled in salt, then peeled and dried, resulting in grain with a light, fluffy texture. This is combined with chicken and vegetables in a broth flavored with soy sauce, rice wine, and soup stock.

According to local lore, members of the Taira clan invented the dish back in the 12th century. Upon losing to the rival Minamoto clan in the Genpei War (1180–1185), they took refuge in the Iya Valley in rural Awa Province (the former name for Tokushima Prefecture). The story goes that with no rice available to them that first winter, they improvised with soba grains instead. Whatever its origins, healthy *soba-gome jiru* is now an established part of Tokushima’s soul-food culture.