

Nagashi Somen (Flowing Noodles)

Nagashi somen is a popular summer food in Japan, consisting of thin, white noodles scooped from water flowing through a bamboo gutter and then dipped in sauce. It is said that the origins of this dish may lie in Takachiho.

Before refrigeration, villagers in the Takachiho area are said to have cooled boiled noodles in the freshwater of Tamadare Falls during the summer months. A man called Sato Mitsuyoshi wanted to make this local practice into a business. Unfortunately, the local department of public health would not grant him a license to sell food that had been run over bare riverbed rock, so Mitsuyoshi decided to emulate a natural spring by creating long “tracks” out of bamboo.

The restaurant near Takachiho Gorge called Chiho no Ie was established in 1955 by Mitsuyoshi, and visitors who enter will find a sign touting it as the birthplace of *nagashi somen*. Today, the restaurant has four bamboo gutters that stream the same cool, fresh water from Tamadare Falls. A recommended meal here is the *nagashi somen* set, consisting of the famous noodles along with Takachiho favorites such as *nishime* simmered vegetables, salad, *onigiri* rice balls, and charcoal-broiled trout. Visitors can enjoy the Takachiho specialty *kappo sake*, sake heated in a bamboo shoot to provide a naturally sweetened flavor.