

## **Yoshida no Udon**

Yoshida no udon is a distinctive noodle dish from Fujiyoshida. The climate and elevation in the area made rice difficult to grow, so wheat was the crop of choice, naturally giving rise to noodles as a staple. The udon noodles used in the dish are a local delicacy, firmer than regular udon noodles. Some children join the Yoshida no udon club in high school, and around 50 restaurants in the city specialize in the dish.

Yoshida no udon is usually served with cabbage, meat, and other ingredients in a warm broth seasoned with miso and soy sauce. Each restaurant offers its own variation, and visitors are encouraged to try several during their stay. Some restaurants serve the dish in the traditional style, with horsemeat, instead of the more “modern style” using pork. Restaurants pride themselves on their house *suridane*, a spicy garnish made of ground sesame seeds and peppers.

Most Yoshida no udon restaurants are open only for lunch, a tradition dating from the early twentieth century, when weaving was Fujiyoshida’s main industry. Men then made the noodles as meals for the household or to serve to textile buyers from urban centers, allowing their wives to focus on their weaving. Later, households whose noodles were popular turned their homes into restaurants—the reason why the classic Yoshida no udon restaurant looks like a private residence from outside.