

Okosta *Okonomiyaki* Experience

Okonomiyaki is a savory, fried pancake-like dish concocted in postwar Hiroshima and famed as the city's emblematic soul food. There is no better way to discover the uniqueness of *okonomiyaki* Hiroshima-style than by learning to make it yourself at the city's Okosta (Okonomiyaki Experience Studio), a dedicated but casual cooking school and restaurant run by *okonomiyaki* experts Otafuku. This local company, among the first to develop dedicated sauces especially for the dish, is a household name across Japan.

All the fun takes place around a giant, pool-table-sized *teppan* hot plate that accommodates up to 10 visitors. There are four such tables on the premises, bringing Okosta's total capacity to 40 people. After visitors don a chef's apron and hat, enthusiastic (and English-speaking) staff will guide them through the cooking process with simple instructions. Unlike regular restaurants, where cooked *okonomiyaki* is brought to the hot plate for diners to eat, here visitors start from scratch, first pouring batter onto the hot plate in concentric circles to create a base.

Next, layers of ingredients, including meat, noodles, egg, and vegetables, are gradually added. This structure, together with a mountain of cabbage, is what makes Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki* unique: in Osaka, for example, the fillings are mixed together before cooking. Visitors can savor their finished creation right at the giant hot plate, drizzled with one of Otafuku's fine sauces.