

【*Zuriage* Udon】

Zuriage udon is an edible part of Chichibu's long history as an agrarian community. The name *zuriage* means “slide” or “drag up” and refers to the unusual way in which these thick wheat noodles are eaten. Normally, udon is served in a bowl of soy-based broth with toppings such as diced scallions, fried tofu, tempura, and slices of fish cake. To eat *zuriage* udon in the traditional manner, however, diners pull the noodles straight from a communal pot and dip them into seasonings in their own small bowls. This eating method is said to have originated with farmers who worked in the mountains and favored a one-pot meal that could be prepared easily and eaten around a single fire.

Another hallmark of *zuriage* udon is the range of condiments with which it can be combined. *Zuriage* udon is often eaten with standard udon toppings, such as diced scallions, *wakame* (a kind of seaweed), dried bonito flakes, grated ginger, sesame seeds, and bits of fried tempura batter (*agedama*). In addition to these, *zuriage* udon can be flavored with more unconventional toppings, like mayonnaise, sesame oil, yuzu, pepper, and even curry sauce. Toppings are chosen purely based on the diner's own preferences.

A number of restaurants in Chichibu offer *zuriage* udon. Instead of eating from a communal pot, diners are served a bowl of udon in hot water and a smaller bowl to prepare their own dipping sauce. Condiments are presented buffet-style, so diners can make their own selections and adjust the flavor of the sauce to their liking. Typically, soy sauce is drizzled over the chosen condiments and can be diluted with a little hot water from the bowl if the flavor is too strong. *Zuriage* udon can also be served cold, a variation that is more common in the hotter months of the year.