

Bungotakada Soba

Soba (buckwheat) noodles are a local staple in Bungotakada, where buckwheat is cultivated twice a year—once in spring and then again in the autumn. Bungotakada boasts the largest area of buckwheat cultivation in Western Japan for *haru soba*, or spring soba, which is planted from late March to early April and harvested around June. This biannual harvest means that diners can enjoy eating fresh “new soba noodles” in both June and November. Demand for soba is particularly high in warmer months when *zaru soba* (cold buckwheat noodles served with a dipping broth) is popular.

A unique characteristic of Bungotakada soba is that the entire process, from harvesting the buckwheat to producing the noodles, is executed in the same area. This makes Bungotakada soba a true farm to table local food. To be considered proper Bungotakada soba, the buckwheat must be grown locally and the noodles must be handmade. The soba must also follow the three *tate* (completed actions) of soba making: *hikitate* (freshly ground), *uchitate* (freshly made), and *yudetate* (freshly boiled before being served). Budding Bungotakada soba artisans can complete a training course at a soba dojo (an immersive space for learning) as one way to acquire the necessary skills to become certified in Bungotakada before starting a business. There are currently 12 certified restaurants in the city of Bungotakada that are certified to serve this distinctive soba.