

## **Shinshu Soba**

Nagano Prefecture is well-known for its high-quality buckwheat noodles, or soba, and the cool, dry mountain climate is excellent for growing the grain. Nagano soba is called Shinshu soba after the old provincial name for the area.

Restaurants throughout the region serve their own varieties of Shinshu soba, either in bowls of steaming hot broth, or cold with dipping sauce on the side. The dish is often accompanied by side dishes made with seasonal ingredients, including edible wild vegetables in the spring, mushrooms in fall, and pickled vegetables in winter. During the summer months, countless plates of chilled soba are served, often accompanied by wasabi and spring onions to be mixed into the dipping broth.

The region around what is now the city of Matsumoto has its own special style of soba called *toji* soba, usually served in the cold months of fall and winter. Diners use a small bamboo basket to dip parboiled soba noodles into a shared hot pot filled with seasonal vegetables, mushrooms, and wild game simmering in a savory broth. The noodles and other ingredients are then ladled into individual bowls for eating. Each restaurant in the region has its own recipe for making *toji* soba, with variations in the broth and added ingredients.