

## **Kumamoto Ramen Noodles**

The noodle soup known as Kumamoto ramen is an offshoot of Kurume ramen, Japan's original *tonkotsu* pork-bone broth ramen. Kumamoto ramen consists of thick noodles in a *tonkotsu* broth, sometimes mixed with chicken broth, along with blackened chips of fried or roasted garlic and garlic oil (*mayu*). This is topped with onion, *kikurage* wood-ear mushrooms, seaweed, and braised pork belly.

Kumamoto ramen is subtler, lighter, and less meaty than Hakata ramen, which has thicker noodles, *tonkotsu* broth only, and raw garlic (with the accompanying risk of garlic breath). Ramen makes for a hearty meal, and is energizing and satisfying at any time of year.