**Kawara Soba: Yamaguchi Prefecture’s Soul Food**

This dish consists of soba noodles made with green tea and topped with a variety of ingredients, including shredded egg crêpe and shredded beef. The noodles are served piled on a piping hot roof tile (*kawara*) and accompanied by a dipping sauce. In a restaurant setting, the visually appealing noodle-tile ensemble takes center stage, but the dish can also be made at home using a hotplate or a frying pan.

Kawara soba is generally served with such condiments as grated daikon radish and red pepper (*momiji oroshi*), sliced scallions, and a squeeze of fresh lemon. The bottom layer of soba noodles crisps up on the hot tile, creating a satisfying contrast with the chewy noodles, beef, and egg above. The dish is similar to the nationally popular staple of fried noodles (yakisoba), but the ingredients are instead cooked separately and then artfully assembled.

*From Battlefield to Dinner Table*

Kawara soba was invented in 1961 by Takase Shin’ichi, a business owner in Kawatana Onsen. Takase wanted to create a signature dish to promote the hot-spring town. The popularity of kawara soba spread to the urban areas of Shimonoseki and, later, across the entire prefecture.

The inspiration for the dish, however, is said to be from a much older era. During the Seinan War (1877), troops loyal to Saigō Takamori (1828–1877) of the rival Satsuma domain (now Kagoshima Prefecture) became embroiled in an unsuccessful 52-day siege of Kumamoto Castle. According to legend, the attacking soldiers heated tiles as makeshift hotplates to roast wild plants, meat, and other ingredients, and thus the idea for Yamaguchi’s signature dish was born. Over time, former Yamaguchi residents have spread the dish to Hawai‘i, New York, and beyond.