

Shoga Joyu Ramen (Ginger and Soy Sauce Ramen)

A Nagaoka comfort food called *shoga joyu* ramen is a savory noodle soup brimming with ginger and soy sauce flavors. It is considered one of the best varieties in Niigata Prefecture, which is famous for the quality of its ramen. Due to the popularity of *shoga joyu* ramen, it is also known as Nagaoka-style ramen.

Shoga joyu ramen is characterized by a mellow ginger taste, which results from cooking this key ingredient in soy sauce-flavored broth. Simmering the ginger yields a smoother flavor compared to adding raw or pickled ginger as a garnish. Each shop uses its own recipe for the soup broth, but the ramen toppings are generally the same: spinach, fermented bamboo shoots (*menma*), spring onions, slices of roasted pork, and a sheet of nori seaweed. As with other types of ramen, a popular way to enjoy it is to hold the chopsticks in one hand and the Chinese soup spoon (*rengé*) in the other, alternating between eating the noodles and sipping the warm, savory broth.

Ramen originated in China, but Japan has developed its own distinct variations, and ramen enthusiasts often travel the country to try regional specialties. One might assume that *shoga joyu* ramen is a warm comfort food for Nagaoka's snowy winters, but it is in high demand year-round. Fans of the dish praise it as a hearty, reasonably priced meal with a rich and satisfying flavor.