

Local Delicacies: *Hatto* and *Abura Fu*

Hatto

Hatto is a traditional dish from the Tome region made by kneading wheat-flour dough into bite-sized, ear-shaped pieces, similar to Italy's orecchiette pasta. These morsels are served in a broth that can be made savory with ingredients such as daikon radish, burdock root, and dried shiitake mushrooms, or sweet with *zunda-an* paste made from young edamame. Popular for its firm, chewy texture, *hatto* is a common household dish in this region.

Hatto, which literally means “prohibition,” received its name as a quiet act of rebellion. During the Edo period (1603–1867), daimyo lords forced farmers to cultivate rice to pay village taxes, and the farmers themselves had to consume other grains. The farmers used those grains to develop *hatto*, but the daimyo feared that letting them indulge in it would distract them from rice cultivation. Therefore, they prohibited people from eating it, except on special occasions.

Abura-Fu

Fu, or wheat gluten, is often used in Buddhist vegetarian cuisine. It generally takes two forms: *nama-fu* (uncooked gluten) or *yaki-fu*, which is grilled for use in soups and broths. However, at the end of the Meiji period (1868–1912), a tofu shop owner in Tome invented *abura-fu*, which is gluten fried in oil. In those days, refrigeration techniques were limited, but fried gluten could be dried to keep it preserved year-round. Savory and crunchy, it is most commonly served over rice in a dish called *abura-fu don*. The dish has earned nationwide acclaim through its success in competitions focused on inexpensive regional comfort foods (“B-grade gourmet”).