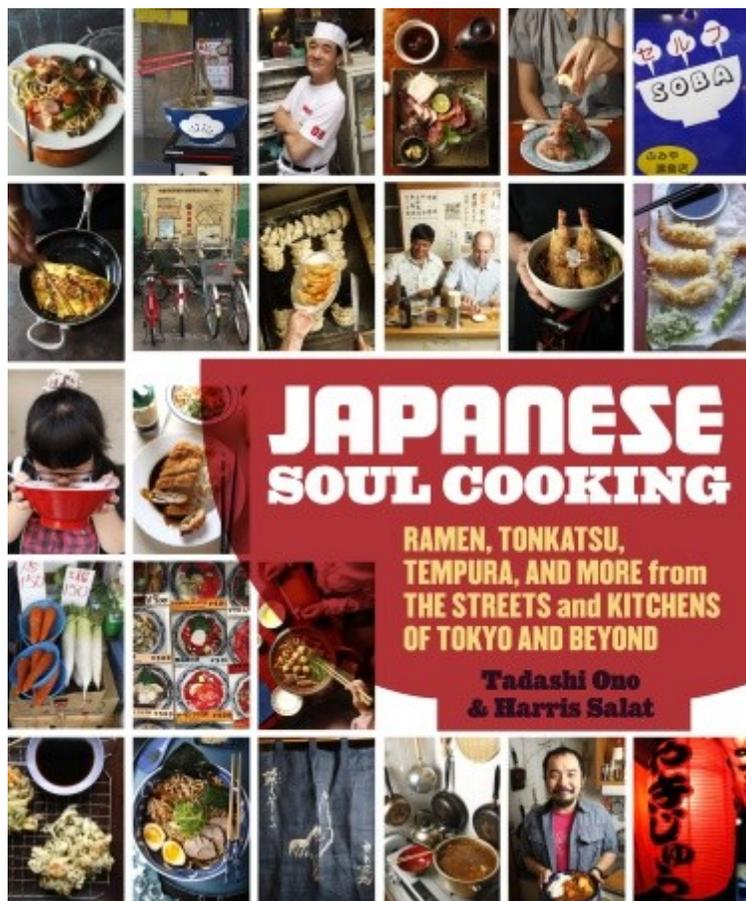


Cook the Book: 'Japanese Soul Cooking'

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When thinking about Japanese cuisine, it's very easy to get stuck in a sushi rut. Most of us know that Japanese food consists of far more than just raw fish on rice, but that fact can be so easy to forget when most cities are inundated with sushi restaurants, grocery stores stock California rolls, and images of Morimoto slicing yellowfin tun razor thin on *Iron Chef* appear on the Food Network every five minutes. And even those of us who have the privilege of dining at some of the many ramen-focused restaurants seemingly opening up every five minutes can forget about all of the other soul warming dishes—donburi rice bowls, okonomiyaki pancakes, tonkatsu cutlets—that are a part of Japanese culture.

That's why cookbooks like the wonderful new [Japanese Soul Cooking](#) can be such a great resource. In it, authors **Tadashi Ono** (of Maison O in New York) and food writer **Harris Salat** have compiled a thorough collection of comforting dishes eaten across Japan. Most of the food in the book is simple home cooking, rich enough to fulfill wintertime cravings.

Dishes often consist of little more than meat (often pork), soy sauce, dashi, and rice or noodles, but each meal has its own character. Chapters are organized by dish, each with a basic master recipe followed by several variations. You'll find ramen, of course, as well as gyoza, tempura, and udon to satisfy those wishing for familiar flavors. But the far more interesting chapters are the ones least familiar to Americans: yoshuku (the Japanese version of Western-style cooking); creamy Japanese curry; and the many different approaches to frying exhibited in furai, korokke, tonkatsu, and kara-age.

Learning about these different techniques is a fun way to spend an afternoon. Each recipe is written with precise detail, and most of the master recipes come with at least a page of step-by-step photographs that illuminate tricky procedures. Short essays on each dish begin each chapter that are just as enlightening as the recipes themselves. Ono and Salat clearly have a knack for writing engaging cookbooks.

As we continue to celebrate the holidays this month, it's worth considering taking a break from the holiday roasts and cookie platters to try a few Japanese soul food meals. We'll be sampling a broad selection on Cook the Book. Pork gyoza will start us off, and then we'll dive into a platter of vegetable tempura. We'll also fry up cabbage-filled Osaka-style okonomiyaki pancakes, and then prepare oyakodon, a chicken, egg, and rice bowl. To finish up the week, we'll have a hot bowl of soba in broth garnished with thinly sliced duck breast.

Win 'Japanese Soul Cooking'

Thanks to the kind folks at Ten Speed Press, we have five (5) copies of *Japanese Soul Cooking* to give away this week. All you need to do is tell us about your favorite non-sushi Japanese dish in the comments section below.