

# The Popularity of Taiwanese Foods in Japan: Factors of Attraction

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## Research background

Since 2019, with the worldwide popularity of Taiwanese bubble tea it has become common to see various Taiwanese foods at convenience stores, fast-food stalls, and shopping malls in Japan. An examination of *Tabemiru*, database service provided by Japan's largest recipe sharing online platform *Cookpad*, shows that the frequency of searches for foods related to "Taiwan" has been rapidly increasing since 2018. In addition, according to Japan National Tourism Organization, the number of Japanese travelers to Taiwan has been gradually increasing since 2018. Maehara and Park (2021)\* defined three major waves of tapioca tea boom in Japan. The amount of imported tapioca during the first wave (around 1992) and the second wave (2003-2008) was under 2,000t, while during the third one which started in 2018, it increased dramatically to reach about 17,000t, which shows how big and influential has the third boom been.

\*Maehara S., Park S. (2021). Factor analysis of the tapioca drink boom in Japan. *Agricultural Information Research* 30 (2): 109-120.

## Research aim

The aim of this research is to examine the consumer perception of Taiwanese food in Japan and the factors that have contributed to the recent popularity of various Taiwanese foods, especially among young people in Japan. Two main research question have been in the focus of this study:

- ① How do Japanese young people perceive Taiwan and Taiwanese food?
- ② How have Taiwanese food been adapted to the Japanese market?
- ③ What factors have contributed to the popularity of Taiwanese food in Japan?

## Research methods

The primary data for this research is based on a questionnaire survey conducted among 109 Japanese students aged 18-22 in October-November 2021 and fieldwork conducted in August 2021 in the city of Nagoya, where the so-called "Taiwan maze-soba" originated. Additionally, 3 owners of "Taiwan food" related businesses were interviewed for this research.

## Fieldwork and survey results

### ◆ The image of Taiwan and Taiwanese food

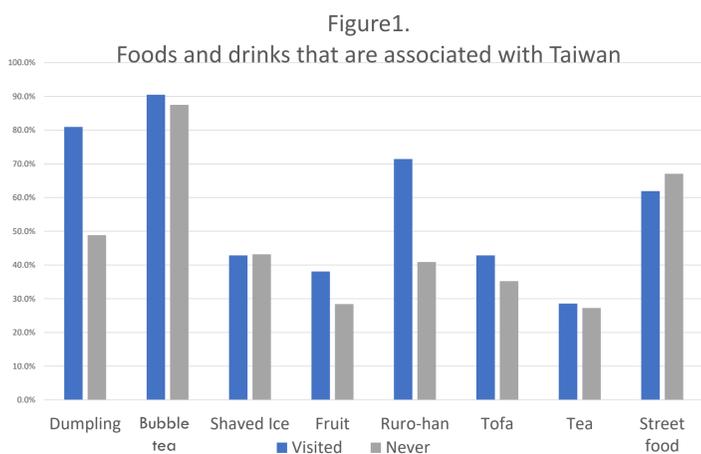


Figure 2. The image of Taiwan compared to China, Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam

	China	Korea	Taiwan
1	Politics and economics (35.8%)	Pop culture (52.3%)	<b>Food culture (75.2%)</b>
2	History and historical sites (33.9%)	<b>Food culture (27.5%)</b>	History and historical site (8.3%)
3	<b>Food culture (18.3%)</b>	Shopping (9.2%)	Nature and climate, History and historical site (5.5%)
	<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	
1	Nature and climate (28.4%)	<b>Food culture (43.1%)</b>	
2	<b>Food culture (26.6%)</b>	Nature and climate (23.9%)	
3	History and historical site (18.3%)	Traditional events (11.9%)	

### ◆ Popular Taiwanese foods in Nagoya

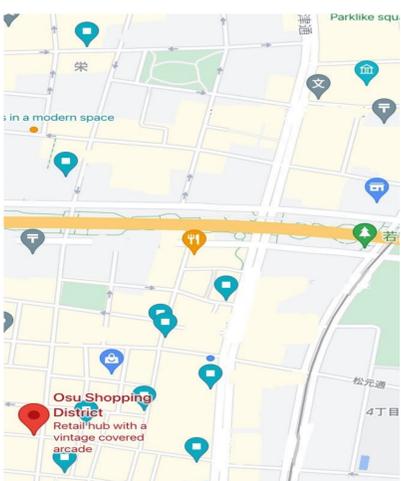


Figure 3. The map around Osu market in Nagoya. Light blue icons indicate restaurants and stands that serve Taiwanese food.

Since the third boom of tapioca bubble tea in 2018, the number of shops that serve Taiwanese street food (such as melon bread, fried chicken, castella, etc.) in Nagoya have been increasing. For example, in the area of Osu market, there are 10 restaurants and shops that offer various Taiwanese foods.

⇒ Unlike the first and the second waves of tapioca bubble tea, the third wave is characterized by the popularity of other Taiwanese foods except for tapioca.

To emphasize their authenticity, many shops often use "Taiwan" in the name of the foods they sell

#### "Taiwan" foods that originated in Japan

#### Taiwan minchi = spicy ground meat

Uniquely Japanese "Taiwan" dishes include "Taiwan ramen," "Taiwan maze-soba," and "Taiwan curry" which are popular in a wide range of restaurants in Nagoya. Their common characteristic is the use of "Taiwan minchi", ground meat seasoned with spices.



"Taiwan maze-soba"

### ◆ Factors behind the popularity of Taiwanese food

Figure 5. Asian countries that people want to visit after the end of the pandemic

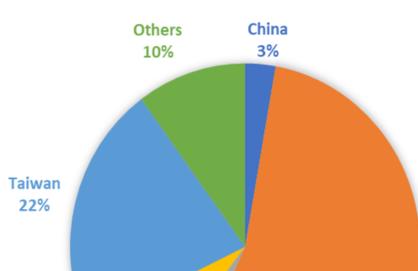


Figure 6. The frequency of search for recipes related to "Taiwan" according to *Tabemiru* database from 2009 to 2021



Figure 7. What are people doing instead of travel during the pandemic?

