

Earlier this month, I had a craving for okonomiyaki. For those who don't know what okonomiyaki is, it is a Japanese savory pancake that often includes cabbage and meat inside the pancake with a special savory sauce, kewpie mayonnaise, and dried fish flakes as toppings. To get your okonomiyaki fix within Seattle, it will set you back around \$12-16! Not to mention that the size of the pancake is way too small, often included in the "small plates" section of the menu. Considering the ingredients, the markup on this dish seemed like highway robbery. This led me to make okonomiyaki almost every night for a week and developing the recipe as I went along.

There is a special okonomiyaki flour that is wheat based with some spices and baking powder, among other ingredients. I was unable to source it from H-Mart, but I would assume that Uwajimaya would carry it. Instead I picked up a korean pancake mix that seemed passable. It cost me \$2.50.



The other two critical ingredients were the kewpie mayonnaise and the okonomiyaki sauce. Kewpie mayonnaise is a richer and more savory asian version of mayonnaise. It is awesome when the mayonnaise is not an ingredient, but rather a component in a recipe as it does have a distinct flavor.



Okonomiyaki sauce is similar to hoisin or oyster sauce, but the primary ingredient is dates, making it a sweet and savory sauce with a unique flavor. I should note that pretty much only the brand Otafuku makes this sauce. The mayonnaise and sauce set me back \$8.50 and \$5.00 respectively.

The last unique ingredient are dried flush flakes, also called bonito flakes or *katsuobushi*. They are made from skipjack tuna that is simmered, smoked, fermented, dehydrated, and then pulverized into flakes. They are extremely rich and full of savory fish flavor. At H-Mart, the package contained 5 of these pouches at around \$5.50.

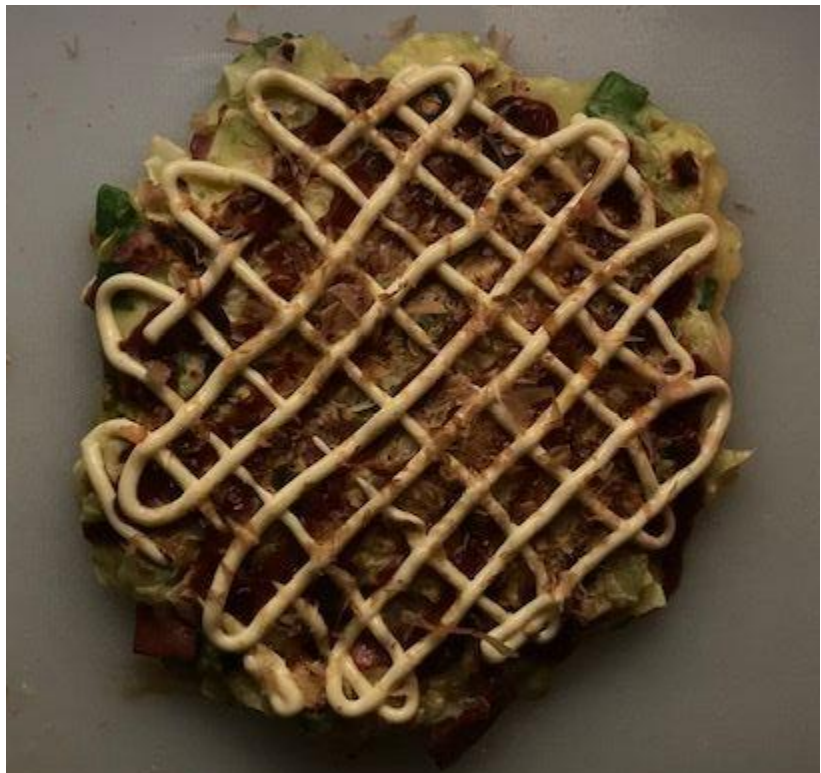
The total cost for these core ingredients came out to be around \$21.50. The other ingredients that I included were cabbage, eggs, green onions, and turkey bacon. I can't remember how much those set me back, but doing some mental math, an individual serving of homemade okonomiyaki is considerably cheaper and more filling than getting one at a local restaurant, as I was able to make two 9" pancakes a day and not even run out of the core ingredients.



The general procedure/recipe is as follows: fry up slices of bacon while you mix the flour, water and eggs until homogenous. Then add chopped cabbage, green onion, and bacon to the mixture. Fry up until set, then drizzle the two condiments and shake on some fish flakes.

My recipe development started with deciphering the package of flour, which was in Korean. It also called for measurements both by weight and by volume, which added to the complication. I decided to wing it to an extent, as I was able to read that a serving of this flour was $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. The first iteration was for 3 people, so I tripled the serving size to match, along with a whole small cabbage, 2 eggs, and 4 strips of turkey bacon. This mixture filled a large mixing bowl and made for two large pancakes. This first run was pretty good considering I had only made them once before in my life. As per usual with pancakes, the second one was much better. Additionally flipping a pancake the size of a skillet does take a bit of skill. At this point I wasn't planning on developing the recipe further, so there are no pictures to share - you can ask Isaac how it was, as it was made at his apartment.

The first one I made at home was one of the best. I used 2 eggs and 4 slices of bacon, matched with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of flour to 100mL of water.



The second iteration was fairly similar, only this time I used one egg and 2 slices of bacon. I also cooked this one a bit more so as to crisp the outside. I think I nailed the condiment pattern on this one. I added pepper to this and did actually notice and disliked its inclusion actually. However I used an abundance of green onions in the mix, which I did enjoy.



The next one I crisped up some onions with the bacon and some spicy chili crisp and used it as a topping. I did enjoy the texture difference, but the chili crisp imparted too much flavor, and generally had too much going on. I used the same ratio of eggs, flour, and water as the previous iteration. Additionally, I used the leftovers from the day before. I think that letting it “marinate” for a bit made for a tighter, more dense pancake, which I think I did prefer.



The next day I tried something a little out of the box. I had some leftover white rice, so I made fried rice with the same ingredients as the previous recipe, which did include onions and the chili crisp. Again the chili crisp was a bit too strong, confirming my hypothesis from the previous



day. However, this final product was absolutely delicious - it reminded me of the sumo bowl from Samurai Noodle in U-District. This iteration opened my mind up to more possibilities with substituting ingredients out for others that make for almost a completely different dish.

The final iteration that I made was ironically the worst. I only used 1 egg to a 3 serving ratio of flour to water ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup of mix to 150mL of water). I was really hungry and didn't let it cook enough so it was not cooked all the way through inside. I learned my lesson that they aren't as straightforward as I initially thought.



To conclude, here is my final ratio that I think consolidates all that i have learned from the past week:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup savory pancake mix
- 150 mL purified water
- 2 medium eggs
- 4 slices bacon (or pork belly)
- 1 small cabbage
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup green onion

Notes:

1. Prepare batter an hour ahead of time, ideally a day before.
2. Dice the ingredients relatively small, otherwise the structure of the pancake will struggle to hold together.
3. Do not add salt or pepper.
4. Add batter to a medium high non-stick skillet, all the way to the edge.
5. Multiple flips may be warranted in an effort to add some caramelization/ crispy action.
6. A little okonomiyaki sauce goes a long way, maybe 2 tablespoons.
7. Same goes for the fish flake, it has a strong flavor. Also about 2 tablespoons.
8. Go a little heavy on the mayo.