



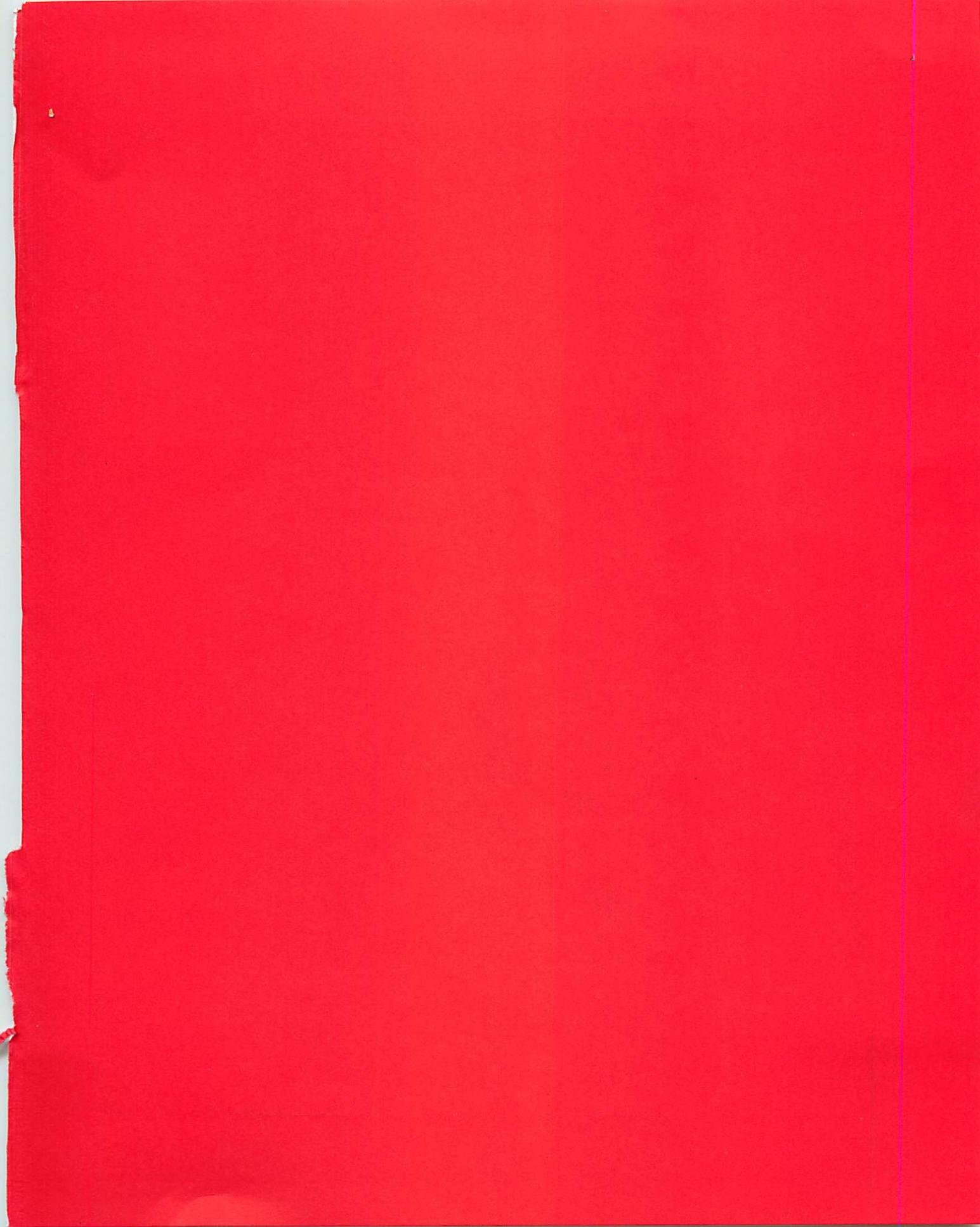
the

wagamama

cookbook

100 Japanese recipes with noodles and much more

Hugo Arnold





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METRO BOOKS
NEW YORK



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New York

An Imprint of Sterling Publishing
387 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

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ISBN: 978-1-4351-2943-6

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Manufactured in Singapore by Tien Wah Press

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

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All recipes serve 2 people unless otherwise stated

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introduction

It is 2:30 on a sunny May afternoon and the original wagamama in Streatham Street in London is full. People are still arriving for late lunches, although the line is not nearly as long as it was an hour ago. On the table next to me are two lovers on their first date. Opposite, a group of eight students sit in animated conversation while up from them an elderly couple hold hands while they drink glasses of raw juice.

My order arrives: *yaki soba* noodles along with a side order of duck *gyoza*, dumplings filled with succulent meat and leeks served with a sweet hoisin dipping sauce. I hear the students all order by number; five of them go for 77, the others select a 71, a 103, and a 76. These are among the most popular dishes. When the second London wagamama opened in Lexington Street in Soho in 1996, somebody made the mistake of altering a few of the numbers. It caused great confusion.

Wagamama first opened its doors to the public in 1992. Since then it has spawned numerous outlets in countries as far apart as Ireland, Holland and Australia and for many—including me—it has redefined the idea of casual eating. The dishes are designed for one-stop eating. I order “sides” because I’m hungry. Many don’t bother and the bill consequently remains remarkably low and very controllable. At wagamama, what you order is very plainly what you pay for. There are no hidden extras.

I pick up my chopsticks and start to eat my teppan-fried *yaki soba* noodles. The dish is a treasure trove of ingredients: egg, chicken, shrimp, onions, peppers, and bean sprouts topped with sesame seeds, dried shallots, and pickled ginger. The ice-cold Asahi beer hits the back of my throat and I’m feeling very content.

Cooking noodles is easy; this is what lies behind the success of wagamama. A combination of fresh and staple ingredients, delivered swiftly in a range of delicious ways, and presented stylishly. Perfect for the home cook, too, in our time-starved age, which is the reason for this book. Preparation time required for most of the dishes is well within 15 minutes and most are cooked in under ten, many in less than five. Considering that the bulk of the ingredients could be sitting in your cupboard at home gives you the added attraction of convenience.

I finish my *yaki soba* and ask for the bill. My waitress, a young student it turns out, in her final year at college and studying physics, chats away as she keys my request into her hand-held computer. As we talk, two more students arrive to join the eight who have already

ordered. In less than 30 seconds their order—given by number, of course—is keyed in and soon they are catching up with their friends over bowls of steaming *ramen* noodles. My bill arrives and in moments I am up on the street again in brilliant sunshine, feeling well fed and refreshed for a very reasonable amount of money.

When wagamama started, nothing like it existed. Founder Alan Yau had considerable difficulty persuading anyone that a large basement site behind the British Museum had a chance of surviving, let alone succeeding. Yet he had a vision and determination not only to serve fast, nutritious, Asian-inspired cuisine, but to do so in a stark, restrained, and ultramodern environment. Some of the wagamama restaurants undoubtedly are "softer" than others—there is more use of wood in some of the more recent ones, for example—but they all retain a definite clean, pared-back look that allows customers and staff alike to provide the action and warmth.

Back in my flat the following day I am testing the *cha han*—one of the most popular dishes—for a group of friends. I have been asked by wagamama to write a cookbook explaining the company's approach to cooking noodles and Asian food and how easy this is to achieve at home. For a year I have been immersed in noodle dishes, the workings of a dynamic and growing company, and a group of highly motivated, hard-working people. I am experiencing the way of the noodle.

The recipes in the book are specified for two people on the basis that you can easily scale up if necessary; I am cooking for six. My friends have all offered to bring beer, so my shopping trip was limited to buying chicken and mushrooms. Soon I am chopping and putting ingredients into bowls. By the time I have cooked the rice, everything is cleared up and people arrive. We sit drinking cold beers and chatting. I have to use two frying pans—to see if the recipe will work without a wok—yet I am in the kitchen for less than 10 minutes (the recipe does work).

All the dishes at wagamama are designed to use a set number of ingredients. That is part of the reason why the service is so fast. Wagamama has redefined the expression "fast food"; taking fresh, nutritious ingredients, cooking them well, and delivering them efficiently. For the home cook this means you don't need to keep a lot in stock, and shopping is very easy. The whole style of cooking concentrates on intense heat, applied for a short period, letting the ingredients shine through and ensuring the cook doesn't spend forever in the kitchen. With these recipes, a sharp knife, a cutting board, and a wok, you, too, can cook the wagamama way.

1

the wagamama kitchen



The wagamama restaurant kitchens are organized so that any item on an order goes to one station where it is prepared. The dish is then put up on the "pass" where it is collected and brought to your table. When you are cooking at home, you are more likely to be preparing a number of dishes together. The key thing to bear in mind is that not much cooking takes place until the last moment. It can seem as if you are chopping and sorting for ages with little to show for your efforts. While this may at first be frustrating, in the end it is part of what makes this cooking so easy.

In the early days of wagamama, much was made of the Japanese management system of *kaizen*, which means continuous improvement or, as chief executive Ian Neill would say, you do something, learn something, do some more things. As with *kaizen* culture, you are using little stages to build the final assembly. Whichever way you choose to explain it, the idea is to chip away and move forward—that way you learn.

Many of the recipes in this book have appeared on the wagamama menu at some time or other. There is nothing complicated or difficult about cooking any of them. We excluded a few of the deep-fried dishes on the grounds that most people don't want to do too much deep frying in their own kitchen and some recipes have been altered slightly to cater for a domestic environment, but in essence they retain the same characteristics as the day they made it through a tasting and onto the wagamama menu.

the equipment

There is no need to go out and buy any special equipment. A wok will make things easier—they are not expensive (best bought from Asian stores)—but a large, nonstick frying pan will suffice. Chopsticks will enhance the eating experience, but a fork is fine. *Ramen* bowls are useful if you are going to cook this kind of food frequently. They are quite large, to accommodate the broth, and tend to be made from a material that insulates the heat so you can pick them up. They are, however, quite expensive. It's best to experiment with the things you already have, initially, and indulge on more expensive equipment later; that way you'll know exactly what you want and why. The one piece of kitchen equipment we did worry about was the teppan, a large flat plate on which the Japanese fry noodles mixed with other ingredients. Yet a heavy nonstick frying pan is a perfectly good substitute at home.

Wagamama sells a limited number of items which may be useful for cooking and presenting some of the dishes in this book. These include: *ramen* bowls, *cha han* bowls, wooden *ramen* ladles, sake jugs and cups, *gyoza* trays, and *miso* cups and lids. Woks, knives, bowls, and chopsticks are all readily found in Asian food stores.

stir-frying—an art or a secret?

While a frying pan can be used instead of a wok, you'll quite quickly discover that the shape and heat dispersal of a wok are unique. And that there is a world of difference between frying and stir-frying, which lies in the speed and temperature at which you cook. Tossing food around in a wok may seem a daunting and challenging way of cooking. A degree of technique and skill must be learned and applied, but it is not as difficult as you may think. Once mastered, it's a dazzling way of impressing your dinner guests and creating some really tasty food to eat.

Wok cooking is about speed. You want to cook the ingredients quickly and preserve as much nutritional value as possible. To do this, you must have heat—and lots of it.

In the wagamama kitchens we have the luxury of custom-made wok ranges which burn gas in a swirling motion, encouraging the flames to cover the whole bottom of the wok and not simply fire into one concentrated area. This helps to ensure an even heat distribution over the wok and eliminates any "cold spots." The average household does not possess such equipment, although there are now gas stovetops which incorporate a central "wok burner." Electric, halogen, and ceramic stovetops are less suited to using a wok than gas stoves, owing to the large amount of movement required during stir-frying, which reduces the contact with the heat source. This is where the large nonstick frying pan comes into its own. The larger the better, because the greater the surface area, the larger the area in contact with the gas flames so, the better the result.

Before stir-frying, be sure you have everything you need at hand: all the prepared ingredients, including seasonings, and warmed serving bowls or plates. It is essential to heat the wok thoroughly for 1–2 minutes before adding any oil, otherwise the wok will never get hot enough.

The process of stir-frying basically relies on movement. Movement is achieved using either a wok scoop, wooden spoon or spatula, or even chopsticks. You also need to move the wok itself to ensure even heat distribution. The wok can be "flicked" to move the ingredients around. This is best practiced in a cold wok with some raw rice. Tilt the wok lightly away from yourself, gently push forward, and then flick your wrist back. This movement causes the ingredients to move to the far edge of the wok and then be "flicked" back towards you. It is about action, not muscle, and with patience and practice, a basic level of skill can be mastered. The same action can be used with a nonstick frying pan. If you use a scoop, spatula, or chopsticks to stir the ingredients, remember to keep them moving. Most stir-fries should take no longer than 2–3 minutes to cook.

seasoning a wok When you buy a wok it needs to be "seasoned" before its first use. Wash in hot soapy water to remove any packing grease or oil, then basically burn it over a high heat until the whole of the interior changes color to a deep blue, almost black appearance. Turn off the heat and smear with vegetable oil, covering all the metal, and let it soak in. After each use, you should wash and dry the wok thoroughly and rub a little oil over the surface to prevent any rusting.

a wagamama meal

The wagamama menu is designed so that one dish is enough for one person, with perhaps a side dish as well if you are hungry. We've constructed the recipes in this book for two people on the basis that two people eating together might like to share a couple of dishes. There are no hard-and-fast rules, however, and if you are catering for four people you may choose to double the quantities of one recipe and leave it at that.

japanese cooking styles In Japan, three cooking styles are traditionally used together in the main part of the meal to ensure variety. There are seven to choose from: deep-fried (*agemono*), grilled (*yakimono*), sautéed (*itammono*), simmered (*nimono*), steamed (*mushimono*), vinegared (*sunomono*), and dressed salads (*aemono*).

At wagamama we have rather liberally interpreted these styles so they can be incorporated in one dish. This may not be the most authentic Japanese cuisine, but we have never claimed to provide that kind of food.

This is not to say we break the rules with little thought for authenticity. In designing dishes we try to ensure balance and grounding. A monthly tasting looks at every dish being considered and, apart from tasting it, we ask lots of questions, pull it apart, and put it back together again. What we are trying to ensure is that not only does a dish taste good, but that it works both for the customer and for the kitchen preparing it. Can we do it consistently well and are there any problems? Only when we are satisfied does it go on the menu.

presentation Presentation of the meal as well as the table setting is an integral part of Japanese dining. Both aspects are equally important in wagamama and undoubtedly enhance the enjoyment of eating noodles as well as rice dishes.

Sit in a wagamama restaurant and your table area has a paper mat and a set of wooden chopsticks specifically for you (both are disposable and produced from sustainable resources). If you find chopsticks difficult, we will give you a fork or spoon, or your server will be happy to explain how to use chopsticks. It is not difficult, but does require a little practice.

All the dishes involving liquid are served in bowls made from lacquer. Lacquer remains cool even when it contains hot liquid, so the bowl can be lifted to drink what clearly cannot be conveyed to the mouth using chopsticks. All the non-liquid-based dishes are served on plain white plates, with the ingredients cut into bite-sized pieces. So there are two issues here: how to use chopsticks and how to eat noodles.

Using chopsticks enables you to enjoy noodles in the traditional way. This involves slurping. The rationale behind this is the need to incorporate air when you eat, so that you fully sense the aroma—much more sophisticated than flavor—of the food as well as the taste. The soup is slurped and the noodles sucked and the more noise you make, the better.

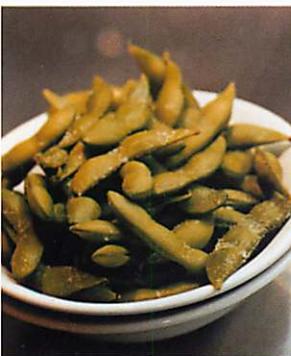
spiciness We are often asked by customers if we can spice up dishes for them. Given our streamlined restaurant service, this is not possible, which is why we leave bottles of chili sauce and soy sauce on the table so customers can help themselves. At home, however, it is possible to increase the chili heat or spiciness when you are preparing the dish. How much depends upon taste and a little experience.

We suggest that you start by following the recipes as specified; that way you know what you are dealing with. If you want more spice, for those recipes that use another sauce, such as *katsu* or *gyoza*, it is a good idea to increase slightly the amount of sauce used. Otherwise, key ingredients to pep up the spiciness include: chile, garlic, ginger, lemongrass, and *shichimi* spice. These are by no means the only ones but a 10–20 percent increase in the amount you add of these ingredients will significantly affect the final spiciness of dishes. Add slowly, taste, and experiment to get the spice kick you enjoy best.



ingredients

Listed below are those ingredients with which you may not be very familiar. Most are obtainable either in large supermarkets or ethnic food stores.



Cooked edamame.



Enoki mushrooms.

Char siu sauce A Chinese barbecue sauce that is widely available.

Choy sum Also known as the Chinese flowering cabbage, it has a sweet, mustardy flavor and is rich in calcium. It will keep for a few days in the fridge.

Chikuwa Cooked Japanese fishcake, similar to *kamaboko-aka* (see right), sold by the tube in various diameters and lengths. It is available from ethnic food stores. It is mild in flavor and if you have trouble finding it, can be omitted without spoiling the overall dish.

Daikon A mild white radish, also known as *mooli*.

Dashi A light fish stock made from *kombu*, a seaweed (normally kelp) and dried bonito flakes (*katsuobushi*)—although dried sardines (*niboshi*) are also used.

Dashi no moto An instant powdered version of *dashi*, commonly used in domestic kitchens in Japan.

Edamame Freshly steamed green soybeans. When served in the restaurants, they are lightly salted and make an ideal accompaniment to drinks. Hold to your mouth and squeeze the beans from the pod.

Enoki These mushrooms grow in clumps and have long thin stems and well defined caps. They are delicate in flavor and if cooked correctly, retain a crunchy texture.

Fish sauce (nam pla) A thin liquid extracted from salted, fermented fish. It should be light golden brown in color with a tangy, salty flavor. If it is dark and bitter, discard: fish sauce deteriorates once opened and darkens as it ages.

Gari, beni shoga Pickled ginger, which was made popular with sushi and is now widely available. It is pink and both sweet and peppery in flavor and varies in strength and in the way it is cut. Fresh gin-

ger root is also much used in Japanese cooking.

Gyoza skins Small, round, wheat-flour skins sold in Chinese and Japanese food stores are used to make the Japanese equivalent to pot stickers (dumplings).

Kamaboko-aka Japanese fishcakes, traditionally white with a pink outer crust, which can be bought in Oriental grocery stores.

Katsuobushi Fermented and dried bonito fish flakes that keep forever, releasing their flavor when soaked in warm water. They are an important ingredient in *dashi* (see left).

Kombu Kelp seaweed, sold dried (to be reconstituted in water before use) and ready-soaked.

Konnyaku Otherwise known as black bean curd and devil's tongue, it is made from the starchy root of the *Amorphophallus konjac* plant and smells fishy. It is available from specialty Japanese food stores.

Menma Pickled bamboo shoots which come in cans and are readily available to buy.

Mikku powder A Japanese seasoning. You can use salt instead if you can't get *mikku*.

Mirin Sweetened sake used for cooking.

Miso A Japanese paste made from fermented soybeans and other ingredients. It comes in a variety of guises, from *Genmai miso*, which is made with brown rice and is chunky and rich, to sweet white *miso* which is light and delicate. Both white and yellow *misos* are used in this book but it is worth experimenting with others to find one you particularly like. We use the red (*aka* or *sendai*) in the *miso* paste for salmon ramen (see page 104).

Miso soup Made from *dashi* and flavored with *kombu* seaweed, cabbage, and dried shiitake mushrooms. It can also be made with white *miso* paste.

Noodles In Japan there are four main types of noodles: *ramen* (Chinese style), *soba* (buckwheat and wheat noodles), *udon* (thick white wheat noodles), and *somen* (thin white noodles). Whichever type you use, noodles are always cooked in boiling unsalted water—and lots of it. They are the perfect fast food, offering a nutritionally complete meal in one bowl. A properly composed noodle soup is the quintessence of freshness and natural purity and, like pasta, is a good source of complex carbohydrates which the body can burn most easily to provide energy.

Oyster sauce Made from oysters cooked with soy sauce and seasonings. It is brown and thick like ketchup.

Panko bread crumbs These have a coarser texture than ordinary bread crumbs. They make for a much lighter and crunchier coating for deep-fried foods.

Pickled cabbage This has a slightly sour and salty flavor and is used in small quantities and stir-fried through a dish. It is sold in cans.

Pickled ginger See *Gari*.

Pickles Almost every vegetable in Japan is pickled or preserved, from *daikon* to eggplant to turnip. This is generally done in salt which retains the vegetables' crunchy texture. Brands vary quite a bit and are widely available. Try several until you find one you particularly like.

Rice Japanese rice, as it is often sold even if grown in America, is short-grained and "glutinous." This word is misleading as the rice doesn't actually contain gluten, but two kinds of starch, amylose and amylopectin (sticky rice has around 83 percent of the latter). The stickiness is important since it is eaten with chopsticks. Contrary to what might be expected, risotto or Spanish rice is closer to the Japanese variety than something like basmati, which is long-grained and not particularly 'glutinous'.

Sake A wine made from rice. Served both warm and cold, it has similarities with dry sherry, which can be used as a substitute in recipes.

Shaoxing wine Made from fermented glutinous rice, it is amber in color, about 15 percent alcohol by volume, and tastes rather sweet, reminiscent of a light sherry, which can be used as a substitute.

Shichimi or seven-spice pepper A grainy mixture of chili pepper, black pepper, dried orange peel, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, slivers of *nori* seaweed, and hemp seeds. This is the perfect seasoning for *soba* and *udon* noodle dishes. It is widely available in Oriental grocery stores.

Shiitake A variety of mushroom which, when dried, develops a strong, meaty flavor.

Spicy fish powder A mixture of ground fried fish and *shichimi* spice (see above).

Soy sauce Comes in two versions, light and dark. In general the light is used in cooking and is the one most commonly referred to in the recipes. Dark soy is much saltier and is used to give stronger color and flavor.

Sweet chili dipping sauce There are various brands with the sweet/chili ratio varying. Try them all and find one you like.

Szechuan vegetables Pickled and preserved vegetables, usually sold in cans.

Teriyaki sauce Made from soy sauce, sake, *mirin* and ginger. It is widely available ready-made.

Tofu or bean curd Made from soaked, mashed and strained soybeans. There are many varieties available—I recommend you use "firm" in most of these recipes. It acts like a sponge, absorbing flavors, and is an excellent protein alternative to meat.

Tsuyu or tsuke sauce A traditional Japanese dipping sauce and seasoning. It is basically soy sauce flavored with seaweed (kelp), dried bonito (a type of fish), sugar, and salt. It comes in various strengths.

Wakame A silky textured seaweed often used in soups. It is available from Oriental grocery and health food stores.

White pepper A common seasoning ingredient in Japanese cooking.



Wakame seaweed.



Panko bread crumbs.

stocks and preparations

Good stock forms the basis of much of the food at wagamama. We use big, specially-made containers that hold vast quantities and require taps to drain off the liquid. At home you will be using a saucepan, but the principle remains the same: lots of good ingredients simmered long and slow. A stock will bubble away quite happily without much attention but there are no shortcuts if you want the real thing.

In our busy lives, however, we don't always have time to make stock from scratch. We recognize this, and give you three versions here: a domestic version of our main stock, a second stock that takes about half as long, and a third that can be prepared in minutes. All three are very different, but we are trying to achieve the best possible result within the time available. Two of them make use of chicken stock cubes; these vary quite considerably. You need to experiment to find one that suits you but, as a general rule, delicatessens and health food stores tend to stock the better examples.

Also included here are some of the basic preparations common to a number of recipes. Cooking noodles and rice, for example, and marinating meat. We also briefly cover the cutting of vegetables. Presentation is very important—in each wagamama kitchen there is a manual showing not only what the finished dish should look like, but also how to achieve it.

preparing vegetables and meat Using chopsticks to eat means each piece of food you pick up has to be bite-sized. That need, balanced by the desire to make each dish visually appealing ensures a lot of attention is paid to the way things are chopped. The wagamama manuals show exactly how a scallion, a sweet potato, and a piece of swordfish should be cut. Perfect presentation may not be quite so critical at home, yet to the eye, a scallion or a carrot cut on the diagonal looks far more attractive than one cut on the square. As a general rule we try to avoid right angles whether slicing meat or vegetables. There is another reason, though: cutting on the diagonal means you expose a greater surface area of the ingredient to heat during stir-frying, so it cooks very fast.

Meat is marinated for two reasons: first to help tenderize it and second to impart extra flavor. The tenderizing is quite slight, and certainly won't make tough meat tender, but it does help to break down some of the enzymes. Adding flavor is the more important reason. In order to maximize the effects of the marinade, you need to "massage" it into the meat, which is best done gently by hand. Placing the meat and its marinade in a plastic bag is a good idea.

noodles The ratio of noodles to liquid is important: in noodle soup dishes, the noodles must not only be suspended in the liquid but also form a platform on which to put the other ingredients. At wagamama we serve 4½ ounces (about 1 cup) of fresh *ramen* noodles in 2 cups of broth. We have adjusted the recipes in this book downwards slightly on the basis that most people's bowls are likely to be smaller than our *ramen* bowls.

In most of the recipes, the noodles are cooked first and then reheated in hot stock to form the finished dish. This is a real bonus which cuts down on last-minute preparation. Noodles, whatever type you buy, are very quick to cook; some only require soaking or fast boiling for 2–3 minutes (refer to the package instructions of the brand you buy). The cooking technique remains the same: as with pasta, you want plenty of boiling water and a pot big enough to accommodate the noodles and allow them to swirl around. Cooked noodles should still have some bite, or resistance—*al dente*, as the Italians say. Unlike pasta, though, it is usual to cook noodles in unsalted water, the seasoning being adjusted when you make up the final dish.

In order to stop noodles cooking you need to refresh them under lots of cold running water. The cold drained noodles will keep for a few hours in the fridge.

rice The Japanese use short-grained rice which is cooked so it sticks together slightly—this helps when using chopsticks. You can weigh rice, but volume is often an easier and more accurate method. As a rule, if you chose not to weigh the rice, the ratio of rice to water is 2:3 and you should allow half a cup of rice per person.

Wash the rice in several changes of cold water, swirling it around with your hand to release the starch. Drain in a strainer and leave for 30 minutes. Put in a heavy pan, add the correct amount of cold water (so for 2 cups of rice, 3 cups of water), cover with a tight-fitting lid, and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down as low as it will go and cook for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let it sit undisturbed, lid on, for another 10 minutes. Transfer to a clean container to stop it cooking and serve.

chicken stock (1)

2¼ pounds chicken bones • 12 ounces pork bones • 1 onion, peeled and chopped • 2 carrots, chopped • 4 leeks, sliced • 1 ounce fresh ginger root, sliced • 4 Chinese (napa) cabbage leaves, roughly chopped

Put the meat bones in a large pot, cover with cold water, and bring almost to a boil. Turn the heat right down and simmer for 2 hours, skimming off any froth that rises to the surface.

Add the vegetables and another 4 cups of water, bring almost to a boil again, lower the heat, and simmer for another hour. Remove from the heat and let cool. Strain off the liquid, return to the pot and simmer for 1 hour to reduce it more. Season with the chicken stock seasoning below.

chicken stock seasoning

2 teaspoons salt • 2 teaspoons sugar • small pinch of white pepper • 1 teaspoon *dashi no moto* (see page 14)

chicken stock (2) *when you need to make stock at the same time as cooking*

2 good-quality chicken stock cubes • 4 cups uncooked chicken thighs or wings • 1 leek, finely chopped • 1 carrot, finely chopped • 4 cups water

Combine all the solid ingredients in a pot, add the water, and bring almost to boiling point, lower the heat, and simmer for 30 minutes. Strain, and proceed.

chicken stock (3) *when you want something to eat now!*

2 good-quality chicken stock cubes • 1 leek, finely chopped • 1 carrot, roughly chopped • 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, roughly chopped • 4 cups water

Combine all the solid ingredients in a pan, cover with the water, bring to a boil, strain, and proceed.

vegetable stock (1)

4 Chinese (napa) cabbage leaves • 1 pound potatoes, peeled • 2 carrots • 2 tablespoons chopped canned tomatoes • 1 small sweet potato • 1/2 small butternut squash • 1 white onion • 1 red onion • 1 leek • 3 quarts water

Roughly chop all the vegetables and put in a large pot with the water. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a gentle simmer and cook, uncovered, for 3 hours. Turn off the heat, let cool, and strain. Season with the vegetable seasoning below.

vegetable stock seasoning

2 teaspoons salt • 2 teaspoons sugar • pinch of white pepper • small pinch of *mikku* powder (see page 14)

vegetable stock (2) *when you need to make stock at the same time as cooking*

2 good-quality vegetable stock cubes • 2 Chinese (napa) cabbage leaves • 2 carrots, roughly chopped • few sprigs of flat-leaf parsley • 3 quarts water

Place all the ingredients in a large pot and bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer for 10–15 minutes if time, then strain.

dashi There are two types of *dashi*/fish stock, generally referred to as primary and secondary. An instant, powdered version can be bought in packets known as *dashi no moto* that simply requires water. Making *dashi* from scratch is not difficult and in Japan is considered a real test of a chef. A formal meal will start with a *dashi*/broth, the quality of which determines what is likely to follow.

primary dashi

4-inch piece of *kombu* (see page 14) • handful of dried bonito flakes (*katsuobushi*, see page 14)

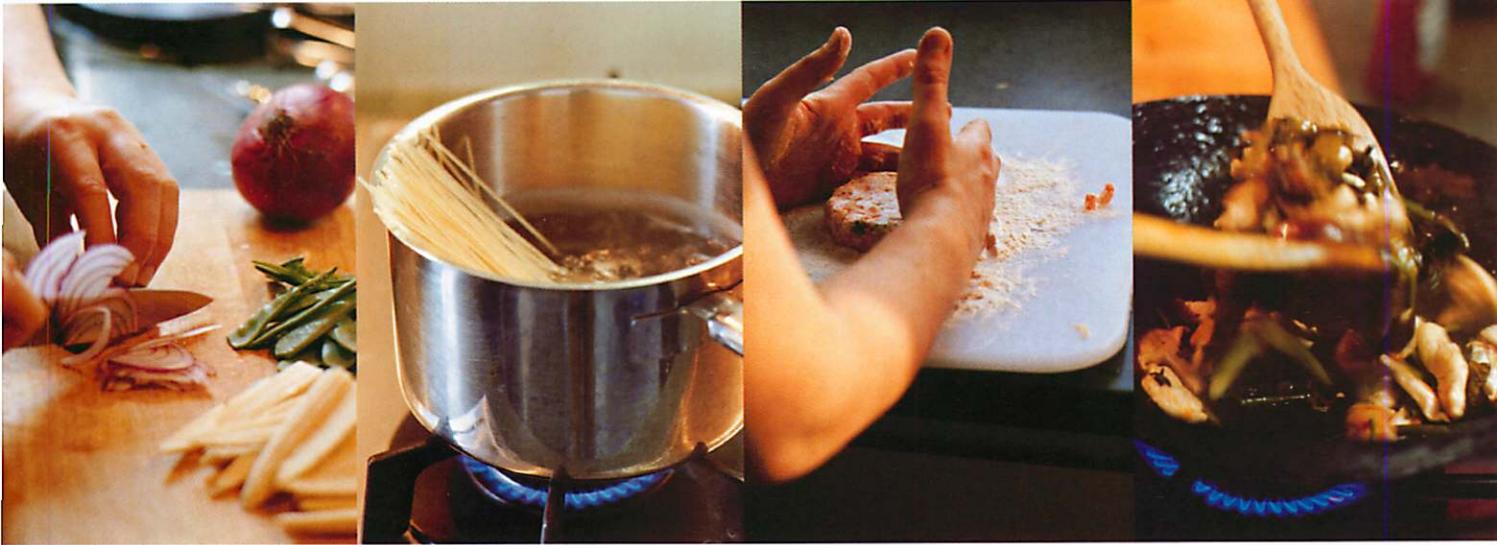
Lightly brush the *kombu* with a damp cloth but don't overdo it as much of the flavor lies on the surface. Put the *kombu* with 4 cups water in a large pot. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Remove from the heat, lift out the *kombu*, and reserve for use in soup. Add the bonito flakes, return the pot to the heat and bring back almost to a boil. Remove from the heat, let the bonito flakes sink to the bottom and strain. (If you leave the bonito flakes in the water for too long, they give a bitter flavor.)

secondary dashi Proceed as above except let the *kombu* simmer gently for about 20 minutes before removing it. (This *dashi* is stronger and is traditionally used for *miso* and simmering dishes. You can reuse ingredients from primary *dashi*, or use fresh.)

vegetable dashi broth

4 cups vegetable stock • scant 1/2 teaspoon *dashi no moto* (see page 14) • 1 teaspoon salt • 1 teaspoon sugar • pinch of *mikku* powder (see page 14) • pinch of white pepper

Heat the stock and add all the seasonings. This can be used as a broth if you or your guests don't eat fish.



curry oil

2 leeks, trimmed and finely chopped • 2 onions, trimmed and finely chopped • 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, finely chopped • 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped • 1 cup vegetable oil • ½ teaspoon dried red pepper flakes • 1 bay leaf • 1 cinnamon stick • 2 star anise • ½ teaspoon paprika • 1 teaspoon curry powder • ½ teaspoon turmeric
Put all the ingredients in a large, heavy pan and cook over a low heat for 1 hour. Let cool, then strain. Covered, this will keep for a few weeks in the fridge.

miso paste

¼ cup sake • 2½ tablespoons *sendai miso* (red) • 6¼ tablespoons *shiro miso* (white) • 1 teaspoon sugar • 2 teaspoons sesame oil • tabasco, to taste • pinch of *shichimi* (see page 15) • generous pinch of *dashi no moto* (see page 14)

Put the sake in a small pan and bring to a boil. Light with a match, remove from the heat, and let cool. Combine the remaining ingredients in a bowl, mix well, and stir in the sake. This will keep for several days in the fridge.

coconut panko bread crumbs

4 ounces *panko bread crumbs* (see page 15) • 8 ounces dry, unsweetened coconut

Combine the bread crumbs and coconut and store in an airtight container.

shichimi spiced flour

1 cup all-purpose flour • 1 heaped teaspoon *shichimi* (see page 15) • 1 heaped teaspoon sugar • generous pinch of salt
Combine all the ingredients. Store in an airtight container until needed.

2

sauces, dips, and dressings



Ramen dishes are traditionally made up of three elements: noodles, a soup base and a prime ingredient of chicken, fish, vegetables, or meat. In reality, however, things are not quite that simple and this chapter explains why.

In addition to the three core elements, each dish needs added flavor, color, and texture. Sometimes this is achieved with a marinade, sometimes with a sauce, sometimes with a dressing. Most dishes incorporate one of these to give greater depth, an intrigue, another dimension. This is the element that leads you on, the one part of the dish that you cannot quite identify, but which provides interest.

Let's face it, noodles by themselves are quite bland, and so, too, is rice. And a good stock, while delicious, can become a little tiresome by itself. How we dress those core elements is key to building wagamama dishes and ultimately this kind of cooking is all about uniting a number of different elements to create a whole. Thus honey pork *ramen*, for example, is lent interest by the barbecue sauce used to marinate the pork; in *yasai chilli men* the chili sauce enhances the delicate flavor of the vegetables; and in *yasai itameru* it is the coconut ginger sauce that gives it oomph.

While these sauces may not form the backbone of the book, they are crucial tools. Increase the amount of ginger used in the coconut ginger sauce, or the amount of spices in the *kare lomen* sauce, and you can greatly influence the spiciness of the finished dish. It is important to remember that these recipes are designed to reflect, in a domestic environment, what we do in the restaurant. Yet as soon as you start to cook these dishes at home they become yours, and your preference may well be for something with a little more or a little less spice. It is the recipes in this chapter that will have the greatest and most immediate impact on the outcome of the finished dishes.

For those of you unfamiliar with Eastern food the presence of sugar may well be a surprise. While in the West we are attuned to the idea that sugar is bad for us, in the East it is more generally seen as another form of seasoning. There is sweetness in many foods and balancing that sweetness with acidity—or sourness—is central to the success of many dishes.

amai sauce

with vinegar, soy sauce, and ginger

Essentially a sweet and sour sauce, this is used primarily for dipping. It keeps for a few weeks in the fridge.

makes about 1/2 cup

- 1 tablespoon malt vinegar**
- 3 tablespoons sugar**
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce**
- 1 tablespoon dark soy sauce**
- pinch of salt**
- 1½ tablespoons tomato ketchup**
- 2 teaspoons tamarind paste**

Gently heat the vinegar, sugar, and soy sauces in a small pan until the sugar has dissolved. Stir in the remaining ingredients and set aside to cool.

To make tamarind paste: You can buy tamarind paste in ethnic food stores, either as a concentrate that needs diluting with water, as a paste to use as is, or in a block. If you buy the block, soak for 1 hour in 2¼ cups boiling water. Then manipulate the pulp with your fingers to extract as much of it as possible from the seeds and pass through a sieve, discarding what is left in the strainer.

chile and cilantro dressing

You can beef up the chile to taste, or simply sit back and enjoy the citrus flavor of the cilantro spiked with soy sauce and ginger. Use immediately before the cilantro wilts.

makes about ¾ cup

- 2 garlic cloves, peeled, chopped, and mashed with a little salt**
- 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and grated**
- 1 red chile, seeded, trimmed, and finely chopped**
- small bunch of cilantro, roughly chopped**
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce (*nam pla*)**
- 3 tablespoons light soy sauce**
- 6 tablespoons vegetable oil**

Combine all the ingredients and whisk together.

Much more time is spent chopping and preparing in the kitchens than actually cooking. A whole morning can see vegetables, fish, and meat being cut for a lunchtime service, which lasts a couple of hours. In the afternoon the process is repeated all over again.

chili ramen sauce

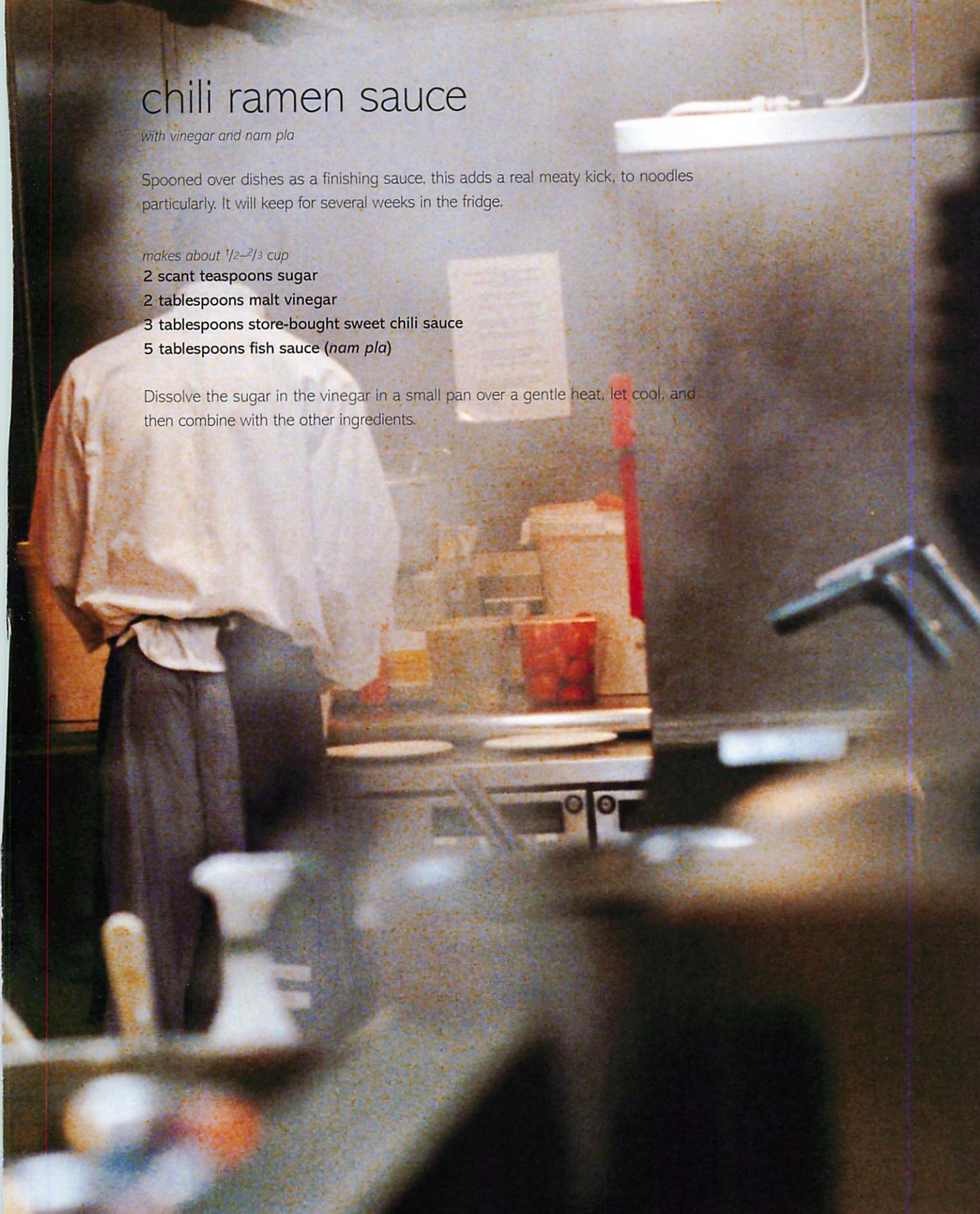
with vinegar and nam pla

Spooned over dishes as a finishing sauce, this adds a real meaty kick, to noodles particularly. It will keep for several weeks in the fridge.

makes about 1½–2½ cup

- 2 scant teaspoons sugar**
- 2 tablespoons malt vinegar**
- 3 tablespoons store-bought sweet chili sauce**
- 5 tablespoons fish sauce (*nam pla*)**

Dissolve the sugar in the vinegar in a small pan over a gentle heat, let cool, and then combine with the other ingredients.





coconut ginger sauce

with lemongrass and cilantro

Stirred into finished dishes, this sauce gives a spicy, rich finish and a flavor that is very much of the East. Take care not to overdo the coconut, it is powerful and can result in the finished dish being too rich. This will keep for about 2 days in the fridge.

makes about 2 1/4 cups

1/4 cup vegetable oil

3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and grated

1-inch piece of galangal, peeled and grated

4 lemongrass stalks, outer leaves removed, finely chopped

2 1/4 cups hot water

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons sugar

1 cup canned coconut milk

3 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh cilantro

salt and white pepper

Heat the oil in a heavy frying pan over a low heat. Add the garlic, ginger, galangal, and lemongrass. Sauté gently over medium heat for 6–8 minutes, stirring until softened and fragrant but not colored.

Add the hot water, bring to a boil then add the salt and sugar. Lower the heat and simmer for another 20 minutes until reduced by half.

Stir in the coconut milk, heat for another 2 minutes, and remove from the heat. Add the chopped cilantro. Check the seasoning before serving and adjust if necessary.

There is nothing to beat fresh coconut. It has a lively, refreshing quality that is never found in a can or carton. Yet realistically, most of us are not in a position to climb a tree or purchase the real thing every time. Can, carton, or compressed block; there is little difference between them.



cucumber dressing

with ginger and chile

This provides a good kick and a delightful crunch and I find it hard not to eat spoonfuls as I make it. Tossed into crispy greens, it makes for an invigorating, spicy salad.

makes about 2 1/4 cups

- 1 cup rice vinegar**
- 1 cup water**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and sliced**
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and sliced**
- salt**
- 8 ounces cucumber, grated**
- 6 scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced**
- 2 chiles, trimmed, seeded, and finely chopped**

Put the vinegar, water, sugar, ginger, and garlic in a pan and bring to a boil. Season with salt and cook for 2 minutes, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Let cool.

Put the cucumber and scallions in a bowl and scatter the chiles over them. Pour the cooled sauce through a strainer over the cucumber and discard the garlic and ginger. Stir well and store in the fridge for up to 7 days.

Buying the best ingredients, doing as little to them as possible and keeping what cooking time there is to a minimum is all aimed at making everything taste fresh and bright.

chili sauce

A thick, sweet red sauce spiked with chile and ginger. This sauce is used to finish dishes off and provides both color and spice. It will keep for a few days in the fridge.

makes about 1 1/4 cups

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 2 lemongrass stalks, outer leaves removed, finely chopped**
- 1 teaspoon peeled and grated fresh ginger root**
- 1 chile, trimmed, seeded, and finely chopped**
- 1 red onion, peeled and finely chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar**
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce**
- 1 red pepper, trimmed, seeded, and finely chopped**
- 1 tablespoon store-bought sweet chili sauce**
- 1 tablespoon tomato ketchup**
- 1 1/4 cups water**

Heat the vegetable oil in a small pan over a low heat until hot. Add the next eight ingredients and sauté for 7–8 minutes without coloring. Add the red pepper and continue cooking gently for 8–10 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, and simmer for 10 minutes. Blitz in a blender and use.

ebi katsu sauce

with mustard and sesame oil

A fiery finishing or dipping sauce that will keep for up to 10 days in the fridge.

makes about 1 1/4 cups

- 1 tablespoon English mustard powder**
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil**
- 1 1/4 cups store-bought sweet chili sauce**
- 1 tablespoon tomato ketchup**
- 1 tablespoon sugar**

Blend the mustard powder and oil until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly. Transfer to a small bowl and chill until ready to use.

ebi kuzu kiri sauce

with lime juice

A sharp, intense sauce for finishing or dipping, with lots of citrus flavors balanced by the richness of the oyster sauce. This will keep for up to 10 days in the fridge.

makes about 1/2 cup

2 teaspoons sugar

2 tablespoons fish sauce (*nam pla*)

1 tablespoon oyster sauce

juice of 3 limes

Gently heat the sugar and fish sauce until the sugar dissolves. Let cool and combine with the oyster sauce and lime juice.

teriyaki sauce

with soy sauce and sake

Primarily used to brush grilled meats, this sauce also adds focus to finished dishes and is great for dipping. It will keep for a few weeks in the fridge. You can also buy various brands of teriyaki sauce.

makes about 1/2 cup

1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup light soy sauce

2 tablespoons sake

1 teaspoon dark soy sauce

Place the sugar and light soy sauce in a small pan over a low heat and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Simmer for 5 minutes until thick, add the sake and dark soy sauce, and let cool.

barbecue sauce

By all means pour one out of a bottle, but this coating and finishing sauce really does have much more character and lick-ability. It's the kind of sauce you really don't want to finish.

makes about 1 cup

- 1/3 cup store-bought yellow bean sauce**
- 1/3 cup store-bought hoisin sauce**
- 2 teaspoons sugar**
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely minced**
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil**
- pinch of white pepper**
- 1 tablespoon dark soy sauce**
- 2 tablespoons light soy sauce**

Combine all the ingredients together. This will keep in the fridge for several days.

Bench seating means you can spread out or bunch up; couples, groups, or singles all get equal billing.







wagamama salad dressing

We have been asked for this recipe more times than any other. Until now we declined to give it out, but the pressure has proved too much!

makes about 3/4–1 cup

- 2 teaspoons finely chopped shallot**
- 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and grated**
- 1 small garlic clove, peeled and finely chopped**
- 1½ tablespoons rice vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon tomato ketchup**
- 1 tablespoon water**
- ½ cup minus 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 3 tablespoons light soy sauce**

Whisk all the ingredients together in a small bowl or screwtop jar and set aside. This can be kept in the fridge for a few days.

Previous page: Making up the wagamama salad dressing. The essence of a good dressing lies in its simplicity; a little too much vinegar or oil and the balance is upset. Confidence is all, along with a little practice.

yaki soba dipping sauce

with soy sauce, sugar, and salt

makes about ½ cup

- ½ cup light soy sauce**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 2 teaspoons sugar**
- 1 teaspoon dark soy sauce**

Put all the ingredients in a small pan and bring to a boil. Lower the heat right down and simmer for 10 minutes. Once cool, it will keep for a few weeks in the fridge.

There is a temptation to make dressings and sauces in bulk, but after a few days some tend to lose their freshness and rather than develop their flavor, they start to level out and taste of little. Making up small quantities as and when you need them really is worth it.

soy, sake, and ginger marinade

This spicy marinade also doubles as a great dipping sauce for meat, seafood, or vegetables. It will keep for up to 5 days in the fridge.

makes about 1/3–1/2 cup

3 tablespoons light soy sauce

3 tablespoons sake or dry sherry

1 tablespoon peeled and grated fresh ginger root

Combine all the ingredients in a small bowl.

gyoza sauce

with garlic, chile, and soy sauce

One of the most useful dipping sauces, all punch and attitude but with a smooth, meaty aftertaste. It will keep for several weeks in the fridge.

makes about 1 1/2 cups

1 large garlic clove, peeled and finely chopped

1 large red chile, trimmed, seeded, and finely chopped

salt

2 tablespoons sugar

1 cup minus 1 tablespoon malt vinegar

1 cup light soy sauce

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Mash the garlic and chile together with a little salt with the side of your knife to form a paste. Dissolve the sugar in the vinegar in a small pan over a low heat. Combine everything and store in a sealed container.

Most of the sauces in this chapter are essentially a way of seasoning: of adding something more: another layer. You can dip according to taste, a little or a lot depending upon preference. How much you stir into a dish can be varied depending upon how you feel. This provides variety, pace and change which means no two examples of a dish are really the same, yet the variation is subtle and controlled.



garlic herb oil

with cilantro and parsley

This is a perfect light dressing for fresh, crisp summer salads. The fresher your herbs, the longer your oil will keep.

makes about 1 cup

8 garlic cloves

few sprigs of fresh cilantro

few sprigs of fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 cup vegetable oil

Both of these dressings have been designed specifically for our dishes, but they work equally well for pretty much any combination of salad ingredients from lettuce to cucumber, radishes to sweet cherry tomatoes.

Sterilize a suitable glass container by running it through the dishwasher or simmering in boiling water and then drying it on its side in a low oven—about 225°F for 30 minutes.

Put the garlic, cilantro, and parsley in the container and add the oil. Cover and store in the fridge to keep the herbs fresh. It will be ready for using in a day and should be used within 10 days.

sweet miso dressing

with sake and mirin

This is a sweet-spicy dressing, which will keep for a few days in the fridge without losing its kick.

makes about 1/2–2/3 cup

2 tablespoons *mirin* (see page 14)

2 tablespoons *sake*

1/4 cup sugar

1/2 cup minus 1 tablespoon yellow *miso* paste (see page 14)

1 tablespoon chili oil

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

2 teaspoons *shichimi* (see page 15)

Put the *mirin* and *sake* in a small pan and bring to a boil. Lower the heat, add the sugar, and stir until dissolved. Pour it onto the *miso* paste and beat until smooth. Add the oils and *shichimi* and mix thoroughly.

tsuyu sauce

with soy sauce, mirin, and bonito

Tsuyu is a traditional Japanese dipping sauce often eaten with cold *soba* noodles. It can also be store-bought, but, homemade, it will keep for several weeks in the fridge.

makes about 1 cup

1 1/4 cups dashi (see page 18)

1/3 cup tea dark soy sauce

3 tablespoons mirin (see page 14)

1/2 teaspoon sugar

pinch of salt

1/2 ounce bonito flakes (*katsuo bushi*, see page 14)

Combine all the ingredients except the bonito flakes in a small pan and bring to the boil. Cook over a medium heat for 15 minutes until it has reduced. Remove from the heat, add the bonito flakes, and allow to soak for 1 minute. Strain, reserving the bonito for use in soup, if desired, and set aside to cool.

zasai chili sauce

with shrimp and paprika

Lots of chili, but you can tone down on the heat if you prefer things a little milder. This delicious finishing sauce will keep for a few days in the fridge.

makes about 1 cup

1 teaspoon dried chili flakes

1 red onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped

7 ounces dried shrimp

1 red pepper, trimmed, seeded, and roughly chopped

2 red chiles, trimmed, seeded, and chopped

1/2 teaspoon paprika

4 tablespoons vegetable oil

3 tablespoons bought sweet chili sauce

1 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

Combine all the ingredients in a blender and blitz to a puree.

yakitori sauce

with soy, sake and mirin

A soy-based dipping and basting sauce, for fish, meat or vegetables.

makes about 1 cup

6 tablespoons sake

2/3 cup light soy sauce

6 tablespoons mirin (see page 14)

1 tablespoon caster sugar

Combine all the ingredients in a small pan and gently heat to dissolve the sugar. Set aside to cool. It will keep indefinitely in the fridge.

When lunch time happens those ramen bowls start shifting off the pass at such a rate even the staff are sometimes surprised. Speed of service is absolutely critical for us and this means in your own kitchen, dishes really do come together in minutes.



yasai vinegar

makes about 1 cup

1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup water

1/3 cup malt vinegar

1/3 cup light soy sauce

Dissolve the sugar in the water in a small pan over a low heat. Remove from the heat and add the remaining liquids. Cool, then bottle, and seal. The vinegar acts as a souring agent and will keep for a few weeks in the fridge.

kare lomen sauce

with lemongrass and galangal

Inspired by the flavors of Thailand, this sauce works really well with lamb (see page 130). It will keep for a few days in the fridge.

makes about 1/2 cup

- 2 lemongrass stalks, outer leaves removed, roughly chopped**
- 1-inch piece of galangal, peeled and roughly chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped**
- 2 onions, peeled and roughly chopped**
- 1 red pepper, trimmed, seeded, and roughly chopped**
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika**
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds**
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric**
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder**
- 1 teaspoon shrimp paste**

Combine all the ingredients in a blender and blitz to a smooth consistency.



Ginger is often given as a possible substitute for galangal, but the two are decidedly different. Galangal has a clean, almost lemony flavor, while ginger is much more soft and rounded. What they do both share however, is an elegant, spicy, peppery taste.

tori kara age sauce

with ginger, soy sauce, and sake

Ginger and soy sauce are such a winning combination it is hard not to drizzle this sauce over everything from plain rice and noodles to gyozas. It also makes a great marinade for chicken. And the good thing is it will keep indefinitely in the fridge, so you can make lots and have it on hand whenever you need it.

makes about 3 cups

- 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and grated**
- 3 cups light soy sauce**
- 1/4 cup sake**
- 1 teaspoon sugar**
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce**

Combine all the ingredients in a pan and heat gently to dissolve the sugar. Set aside to cool.

*It's great
to be able
to see the
inside of the
kitchen and
to see the
food being
prepared.*

Yang, Boston

yasai soba dressing

with lemongrass and ginger

This is a thick dressing, designed to coat noodles rather than salad greens, although the latter are rather good too. It will keep for months in the fridge.

makes about 2/3 cup

- 2/3 cup teriyaki sauce, homemade (see page 28) or store-bought**
- 4 1/2 tablespoons crushed yellow bean sauce**
- 1 lemongrass stalk, outer leaves removed, finely sliced**
- 1 tablespoon peeled and grated fresh ginger root**

Put all the ingredients in a mixing bowl and combine until blended.

3

sides and other small dishes



Eating at wagamama is very informal. Food arrives as it is cooked, making it as fresh and hot as possible. We eschew the traditional structure of appetizers and main courses in favor of a more accessible route. If you'd like a second plate of *gyozas*, it is simple to order and is likely to be delivered in moments. If you are joined by later-comers, they are easily accommodated.

The reasons for this approach are many, but chief among them is the more Oriental way of structuring a meal. Several dishes appear on the table at once. The idea is to be as relaxed and easy-going as possible. And the sharing aspect is integral.

As a result of this approach "sides" is about as far as it goes in terms of first courses. Sides are really things to nibble on while you sip a glass of cold beer, white wine, or a juice, or may provide an extra offering for people who are particularly hungry. This chapter is devoted to those dishes that are perfect to serve before your main course, or to accompany a range of other dishes.

We have gained something of a reputation for our *gyozas*: small dumplings filled with combinations of meat, fish, and vegetables, and presented with various dipping sauces that typically feature a little chili, ginger perhaps, and maybe soy sauce. Most of these sauces will keep for a few days if not weeks in the fridge, so there is no need to make them fresh every time. *Gyozas* can be deep-fried, grilled, or steamed. We do them all three ways on the menu for variety, but for cooking at home we'd suggest you find the style you like best and stick with that.

Several recipes feature chicken thigh meat. Ground chicken is not the same thing at all as it tends not to include the brown thigh meat. The best option is to buy thighs and then skin and bone them, and chop them into cubes or blitz briefly in a food processor.

Most of the sides featured here are morsels to be picked up using chopsticks or fingers, but there are a few more substantial dishes as well. The oven-steamed mussels in sake and ginger (see page 55), for example, is a somewhat larger serving but the idea remains the same: something to eat with the fingers in a relaxed and informal way. A few of the recipes for sides, such as the *gyozas*, are designed for serving more than two people as it is often just not practical to break down the amounts you'd need for such a small number.

The *ebi katsu* (bread-crumbed and shallow-fried shrimp, see page 52) are very typical of the bar snacks found around Tokyo, indeed throughout Japan. They are often served alongside *edamame* (soybeans in the pod), which is one of our most popular dishes, the ultimate nibble food and a far cry from peanuts. You may need to go to a specialty store to find them, but very little is needed to turn them into an excellent snack (see page 46).



negima yakitori

char-broiled chicken with yakitori sauce

One of our most popular sides. Perfect with an ice-cold beer, the *yakitori* sauce adds a subtle spiciness. A really simple and easy appetizer.

10 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thigh meat (see page 41)

12 scallions

salt and white pepper

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1/4 cup *yakitori* sauce (see page 37)

6 bamboo skewers, soaked in cold water for 2 hours

Talking about the menu and the food: some customers order by number, others less familiar with the menu like to have things explained. There is no formality or structure at wagamama, you order as you like and the food comes as soon as it is ready.

Cut the chicken into 1-inch cubes. Trim the green end and root of the scallion and cut into 1-inch pieces from the root up. Thread the chicken and scallion pieces alternately onto the skewers (each skewer should have 3 pieces of chicken and 2 pieces of scallion). Season with salt and white pepper.

Heat a heavy frying pan or grill pan over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until hot and almost smoking and add the oil. Cook the skewers, turning frequently, for about 5–6 minutes until golden brown. Drain on paper towels to remove any excess oil and brush with the *yakitori* sauce. Serve immediately.

caramelized sweet potatoes

with golden syrup and black sesame seeds

9 ounces sweet potato, peeled and cut into thin wedges

vegetable oil, for deep-frying

1 teaspoon golden syrup

juice of 1/2 lemon

1 teaspoon black sesame seeds, for sprinkling

Soak the sweet potato wedges for 5 minutes in cold water. Drain well, then pat dry with paper towels.

Fill a large pan one-third full of oil and heat to 350°F or until a cube of bread added to the oil browns in 30 seconds. Carefully lower the wedges into the hot oil and cook for 5 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from the oil and drain well on paper towels.

Combine the syrup with the lemon juice and heat in a small saucepan. Pour it over the potato wedges, stir well to coat, then transfer to a serving plate and sprinkle with the sesame seeds.







edamame

steamed soybeans with chile

This recipe is from our restaurants in Sydney where they like things a touch more spicy. In the UK, we don't use the oil or the chile and simply steam the beans for 2 minutes, then add salt. Why not try both versions—either way, the dish is surprisingly addictive and makes a great appetizer.

- 8 ounces edamame in their pods**
- 1 red chile, trimmed, seeded, and finely chopped**
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil**
- 1 teaspoon salt**

Put the *edamame* in a steamer over a pan of salted water and cook for 1–2 minutes, until firm but still with a bite. Drain thoroughly.

Heat a frying pan until hot and add the chile and sesame oil. Add the *edamame* and stir-fry for 1 minute. Serve, sprinkled with salt, in a bowl and provide another bowl for the pods.

Previous page left: Woked edamame, Australian style. Easy to make, easy to eat: simply hold the pod to your mouth and squeeze.

Previous page right: At Wagamama we serve customers; age is not an issue. All are welcome.

miso soup and pickles

with scallions and wakame

- 1 tablespoon dried wakame (see page 15), soaked in cold water for 5 minutes**
- 2½ cups dashi, made with dashi no moto (see page 14) according to the package instructions**
- 3 tablespoons miso paste (see page 19)**
- pinch of mikku powder (see page 14)**
- 2 scallions, trimmed and sliced**
- pickles (see page 15), for serving**

Drain the soaked *wakame* and roughly chop. Bring the *dashi* to a boil and whisk in the *miso* paste. Add the *mikku* powder.

Divide the *wakame* and scallions between 2 cups or small bowls and pour the *miso* soup over them. Serve with a portion (1 scant tablespoonful per person) of mixed pickles.

dashi is a stock based on fish and seaweed. It is key to Japanese cooking and a chef is traditionally judged on its quality. Its simplicity is telling. *Miso* soup is a combination of *dashi* flavored with *miso*, in our case white *miso* but there are other versions. We also add *wakame* (seaweed) and scallion. The pickles are traditional and while refrigeration has made the need for pickling largely redundant, in Japan the taste for these crunchy morsels is as strong as ever.

raw salad

mixed greens with red pepper, cherry tomatoes, and wagamama dressing

1/2 red pepper, trimmed, seeded, and finely sliced

4 handfuls of various salad greens

1/4 cup wagamama salad dressing (see page 32)

salt and white pepper

6 cherry tomatoes, left whole or cut in half

6 slices of cucumber

Plunge the pepper slices into iced water until they curl, which will take a few minutes.

Combine the salad greens with the dressing in a bowl and toss well. Check the seasoning. Divide the greens between 2 plates and scatter the tomatoes, cucumber, and red pepper over them.



yasai yakitori

grilled vegetable skewers with yakitori sauce

- 1 zucchini, cut into 1-inch slices
- 3 thick scallions, bulb end only, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 orange pepper, trimmed, seeded, and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 6 button mushrooms
- 6 cherry tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- salt and white pepper
- 2 tablespoons *yakitori* sauce (see page 37)
- 6 bamboo skewers, soaked in cold water for 2 hours

Thread 1 piece of vegetable per skewer so each skewer contains 5 pieces. Brush each skewer lightly with vegetable oil and season with salt and white pepper.

Heat a heavy frying pan or grill pan over medium heat for 1–2 minutes until hot and almost smoking. Cook the skewers, turning frequently, for 4–5 minutes until golden brown.

Drain on paper towels to remove excess oil. Brush with the *yakitori* sauce and serve immediately.



yasai gyoza

steamed vegetable dumplings with soy sauce and sesame oil

Easy to prepare, quick to cook, but you need to make about 30 as it is very hard to get the mixture the correct consistency for less. If you are catering for smaller numbers, they will freeze well.

makes about 30

9 ounces canned water chestnuts, drained
2 ounces green cabbage
½ ounce Chinese cabbage (napa cabbage)
1 small carrot
½ onion
1 celery stalk
¼ cup cornstarch
1 tablespoon light soy sauce
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
pinch of white pepper
1 package gyoza skins (see page 14)
vegetable oil, for frying
gyoza sauce, for serving (see page 33)



Put the water chestnuts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, carrot, onion and celery in a food processor and pulse briefly until finely chopped. (Do not over-blend or the mixture will become a pulp.) Using a clean lintfree dishtowel, gently but firmly squeeze the mixture to remove the excess moisture. Tip into a large bowl and stir in the cornstarch, soy sauce, sesame oil, salt, sugar, and white pepper.

Put a teaspoonful of the mixture in the center of each gyoza skin. Moisten one of the edges with a little water, then fold it over to create a half-moon shape. Press down, to form a neat crescent.

Heat a large frying pan over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until hot and almost smoking and add 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Put 3 or 4 of the dumplings in the pan and sauté gently for 2 minutes over a low heat until just starting to brown. Don't be tempted to overcrowd the pan or they will stew.

Remove the pan from the heat, add 3 tablespoons of water, and cover immediately with a lid or with aluminum foil. Return to the heat for 1 minute, then remove and set aside for another 2 minutes, by which time the gyozas will be heated through. Repeat for the remaining gyozas.

*Perfect finger food.
gyozas are often shared
in the restaurants and
make great party food.
We serve them with a
chili, garlic, and soy
sauce dip.*



ebi gyoza

shrimp, soy sauce, and sesame dumplings

makes about 30

5 ounces cooked peeled shrimp
4½ ounces canned water chestnuts, drained
2 scallions, trimmed
4 ounces fresh baby spinach leaves
1 tablespoon cornstarch
pinch each of salt, sugar, and white pepper
1 teaspoon oyster sauce
1 teaspoon light soy sauce
1 teaspoon sesame oil
1 package gyoza skins (see page 14)
vegetable oil, for frying
gyoza sauce, for serving (see page 33)

Put the shrimp, water chestnuts, and scallions in a food processor and blitz until finely minced.

Put the spinach in a colander over the sink and wilt by pouring a kettle of boiling water over it. Let cool and drain, then squeeze gently but firmly to remove the excess water.

Finely chop the spinach and stir into the shrimp mixture along with the cornstarch, salt, sugar, white pepper, oyster sauce, soy sauce, and sesame oil.

Put a teaspoonful of the mixture in the center of each gyoza skin. Moisten one of the edges with a little water, then fold it over to create a half-moon shape. Press down, to form a neat crescent.

Heat a large frying pan over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until hot and almost smoking and add 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Put 3 or 4 of the dumplings in the pan and sauté gently for 2 minutes over a low heat until just starting to brown. Don't be tempted to overcrowd the pan or they will stew.

Remove the pan from the heat, add 3 tablespoons of water, and cover immediately with a lid or with aluminum foil. Return to the heat for 1 minute, then remove and set aside for another 2 minutes, by which time the gyozas will be heated through. Repeat for the remaining gyozas.



Gyozas are really easy and fun to make, the secret is not to over-blend the filling and to make sure you don't over-fill the skin. Practice makes perfect, as they say.

ebi katsu

pan-fried tiger shrimp with chili and garlic dipping sauce

Nobody does bread crumbs better than the Japanese. They have several grades and the top grade costs serious money. It's all in the texture, crispy but not too heavy. And remember to use a fresh and pure vegetable oil for frying, you want as neutral a flavor as possible.

- 1 heaped tablespoon flour, seasoned with a pinch of salt**
- 1 egg, beaten**
- 1 ounce panko bread crumbs (see page 15)**
- 10 raw tiger shrimp, peeled and deveined, tail left on**
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil**
- 2 tablespoons ebi katsu sauce (see page 27)**
- 1 lime, cut in half, for serving**

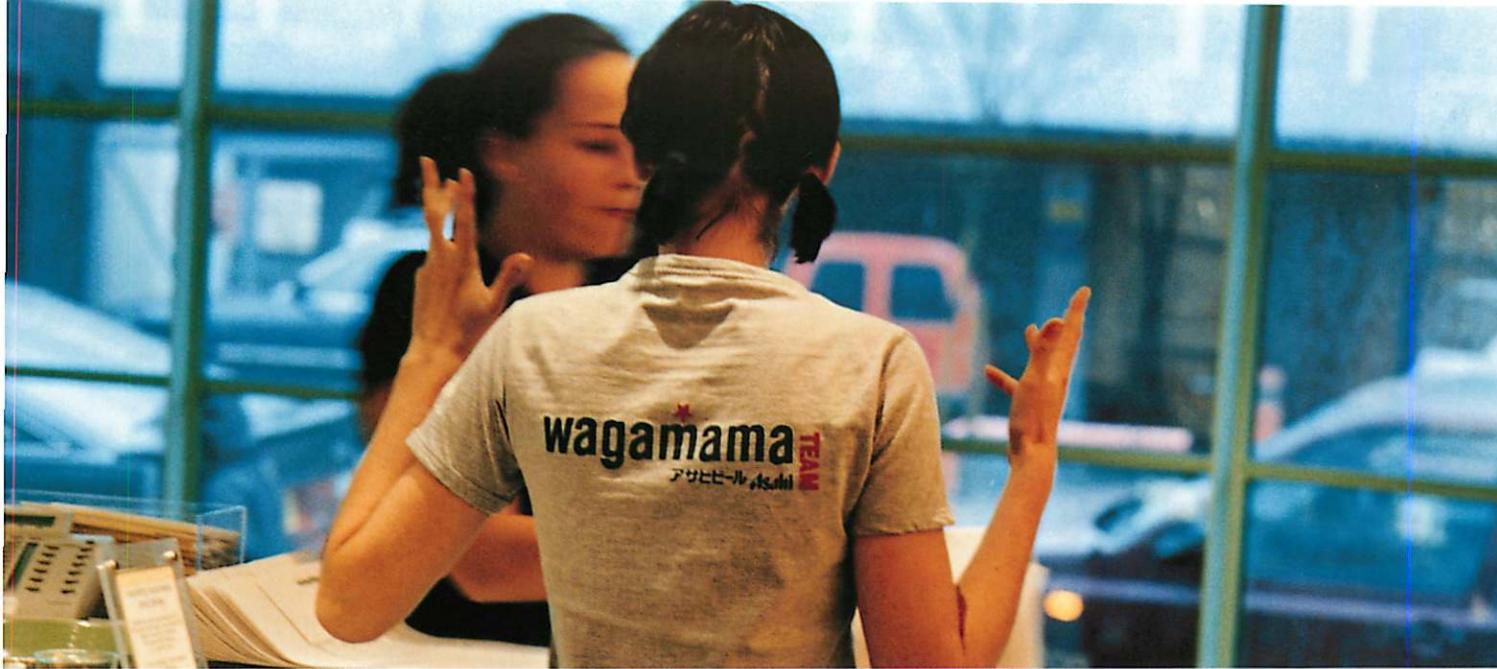
Put the flour, beaten egg, and bread crumbs into three separate bowls. Dip each shrimp first in the flour, then the egg, and finally the crumbs. Put on a clean plate lined with paper towels and press the crumbs onto the shrimp to stop them from falling off. Chill until ready to use.

Heat a heavy frying pan over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Pan-fry the shrimp in 2 batches, so as not to overcrowd the frying pan, until golden brown on both sides.

Arrange on a plate with a small bowl of the *ebi katsu* sauce and lime halves.

*Customers often find pronouncing the names
of the dishes difficult. We all do. It doesn't
matter a bit and that makes me smile.*

Una, Dublin



cured marinated salmon salad

with chile, lime juice, and cucumber

- 1 teaspoon sugar
- juice of 1 lime, plus 2 tablespoons
- 1 garlic clove, peeled, finely chopped, and mashed with a little salt
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons light soy sauce
- 2 slices (3 ounces) fresh salmon, cut into 2mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ -inch) strips
- 5 ounces bean sprouts
- 3 ounces cucumber, grated
- 1–2 red chiles, trimmed and very thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 2 sprigs of flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

To make the marinade, combine the sugar and 2 tablespoons of the lime juice in a small bowl and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Add the garlic, sesame oil, and soy sauce, and stir until emulsified.

Toss the salmon strips in 4 tablespoons of the marinade. Cover and place in the fridge for 3 hours.

To serve, arrange the salmon strips in a flower pattern on 2 plates, working from the outside edge of the plate inwards. Pour the remaining marinade around the plate edge.

Blanch the bean sprouts in boiling water for 10 seconds, drain, and refresh under cold running water. Shake off the excess water and combine with the cucumber and chile. Sprinkle with the juice of the whole lime. Pile into the center of each plate and scatter the parsley over it.

The "team" part of the T-shirt logo is central to the wagamama management philosophy of *kaizen*: everyone concerned with wagamama is actively involved in suggesting and implementing small improvements to the operation.



oven-steamed mussels

in sake, soy sauce, and ginger

- 1 pound, 2 ounces live mussels
- 2 leeks, trimmed and julienned
- 1 red onion, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 carrot, peeled and julienned
- 4 scallions, trimmed and julienned
- 1 green chile, trimmed and thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger root, peeled and julienned
- 1/4 cup sake
- 2 tablespoons light soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 pieces of turkey foil, each 24 inches square

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Clean and debeard the mussels. Tap any open ones and discard any that do not close. Lay out the squares of foil, shiny side up.

Mix together the mussels and all the vegetables, along with the chile, garlic, and ginger in a large bowl. Divide the mixture into 2, put in the center of each square, and pull up the edges to begin to form a bundle.

Pour the sake and soy sauce over them and dot with the butter. Scrunch up the foil edges to form a tightly closed bundle. Put on 2 baking sheets and cook in the oven for 15 minutes or until the mussel shells have opened. Tip into bowls to serve.

Although we don't serve mussels in the restaurants, these inexpensive delicacies are perfect for flavoring with the likes of ginger, sake, and soy sauce. A more dramatic way of serving them is to present them in the foil, and once opened, the steam engulfs you with a heady mixture of ginger and soy.



chicken gyoza

chicken, cabbage, and chive dumplings with oyster sauce

To say we sell lots of gyozas in the restaurants is a bit of an understatement, everyone seems to adore them whether stuffed with shrimp, duck, chicken, or vegetables.

makes about 30

4 ounces Chinese cabbage (napa cabbage)
5 ounces green cabbage
3½ ounces canned water chestnuts, drained
9 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thigh meat, ground (see page 41)
1 ounce fresh chives, finely chopped
¼ cup cornflour
1 teaspoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon oyster sauce
1 tablespoon light soy sauce
1 teaspoon sugar
pinch of salt and white pepper
1 package gyoza skins (see page 14)
vegetable oil, for frying
gyoza sauce, for serving (see page 33)

Put the Chinese cabbage, green cabbage, and water chestnuts in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped but not pureed. Using a clean lintfree dishtowel, squeeze the mixture gently but firmly to remove the excess moisture, then tip into a bowl and add the ground chicken, chives, cornstarch, sesame oil, oyster sauce, soy sauce, sugar, salt, and white pepper.

Put a teaspoonful of the mixture in the center of each gyoza skin. Moisten one of the edges with a little water, then fold it over to create a half-moon shape. Press down, to form a neat crescent.

Heat a large frying pan over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until hot and almost smoking and add 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Put 3 or 4 of the dumplings in the pan and sauté gently for 2 minutes over a low heat until just starting to brown. Don't be tempted to overcrowd the pan or they will stew.

Remove the pan from the heat, add 3 tablespoons of water, and cover immediately with a lid or with aluminum foil. Return to the heat for 1 minute, then remove and set aside for another 2 minutes, by which time the gyozas will be heated through. Repeat for the remaining gyozas.



spiced tofu katsu

crispy tofu with sweet chili sauce

Enticingly spicy with crispy bread crumbs and soft, creamy tofu underneath; deep-frying is only one of the many ways to cook this versatile ingredient. Tofu (or bean curd), the milk of soybeans, is rich in protein and virtually tasteless, but it works by absorbing all sorts of exciting flavors. It is by no means a modern food and is held in such high regard, some countries refer to it as the "meat of the fields."

10 ounces firm tofu, cut into 4 equal-sized rectangles, about 1/2-inch thick

1 tablespoon *shichimi* (see page 15)

1 teaspoon salt

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

2 eggs, beaten

2 ounces *panko* bread crumbs (see page 15)

vegetable oil, for deep-frying

1/4 cup store-bought sweet chili sauce, for dipping

Pat the tofu cubes dry with paper towels to remove the excess water. In a small bowl, mix together the *shichimi*, salt, and flour. Put the beaten egg in another bowl and the bread crumbs in a third. Dip the tofu slices first in the spiced flour, then in the beaten egg, and finally in the bread crumbs. Dip them again in the egg and the breadcrumbs for a really good coating.

Fill a large pan one-third full with oil and heat until 350°F or until a cube of bread added to the oil browns in 30 seconds. Deep-fry the coated tofu until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Put onto 2 plates, with a small dish of sweet chili sauce.

Some consider our restaurants very minimalist in design and while this may be true, it allows the staff to play centre stage, which is a crucial part of how the company is run.

tori kara age

deep-fried chicken with soy sauce and sake

10 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thigh meat, cut into 1-inch cubes (see page 41)

3 tablespoons *tori kara age* sauce (see page 39)

1 egg, beaten

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon dried oregano

2 teaspoons cornstarch

vegetable oil, for deep frying

for serving

2 tablespoons *gyoza* sauce (see page 33)

1 lime, cut into wedges

Marinate the chicken in a shallow bowl in the *tori kara age* sauce for at least 1 hour and if possible, overnight.

In another bowl, mix together the egg, herbs, and cornstarch until smooth, then add the marinated chicken pieces and turn to coat thoroughly.

Fill a large pan one-third full with vegetable oil and heat to 350°F or until a cube of bread added to the oil browns in 30 seconds. Deep-fry the chicken for 5 minutes until golden brown, using a pair of chopsticks or tongs to separate any cubes that stick together.

Drain on paper towels. Serve with a small dish of *gyoza* sauce and a wedge of lime.



We have limited the number of deep-fried recipes in this book, but this chicken is too good to miss out on, crispy and succulent with a gentle spicy kick. Finger food to linger over.





seared beef sashimi

beef carpaccio and vegetable salad with ginger and cilantro

A dish that provides amazing colour as well as taste. In the Sydney restaurants we serve this with gyoza sauce (see page 33), which makes a delicious dip.

4 ounces tenderloin steak
salt and white pepper
1 small carrot, peeled and very thinly sliced lengthwise
½ English cucumber, seeded and thinly sliced lengthwise
4 scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced
1 ounce snow peas, thinly sliced lengthwise
½ red onion, peeled and thinly sliced
½ green chile, trimmed, seeded, and thinly sliced lengthwise
½ red chile, trimmed, seeded, and thinly sliced lengthwise
½ tablespoon fresh ginger root, peeled, and julienned
1½ tablespoons olive oil, for drizzling
1½ tablespoons light soy sauce, for drizzling
4 sprigs of cilantro (coriander leaves), for garnishing

Season the steak with salt and pepper. Heat a nonstick frying pan until really hot and almost smoking and sear the beef for 15 seconds on each side until golden brown.

Remove the beef from the heat and plunge it into iced water for about 30 seconds. Wrap in plastic wrap and place in the freezer for 1 hour to firm up.

Put all the vegetables, chiles, and ginger into fresh iced water for 30 minutes to crisp. Remove and drain thoroughly.

To serve, slice the beef into wafer-thin slices and arrange around the edge of a serving plate. Put the vegetable mixture in the center.

Drizzle the olive oil over the steak and vegetables, followed by the soy sauce, and top with the cilantro.

4

chicken



I'm walking down a shopping mall in the center of Tokyo feeling a little hungry. Past the boutiques and electronic shops I'm suddenly hit by the aroma of grilling chicken. The bar is doing a roaring trade in ice-cold beers and the chef is skillfully flipping skewers of chicken on his long chargrill. Time for a break.

Grilled chicken, roast chicken, even poached chicken is hard to resist, one of those smells that we all associate with comfort and warmth. *Negima yakitori* (see page 42) is one of the most popular sides at wagamama, and chicken features widely on the menu because of its universal popularity.

The Japanese are not traditionally big meat eaters—lack of land is one of the practical reasons for this, but religion and tradition also play their part. Both chicken and duck are popular, not least because the meat cooks quickly. In dishes like chicken chili *men* and *yaki soba*, the speed of cooking means chicken is ideal as a protein element kept in balance with all the other ingredients.

Chicken is widely used in all Asian cooking, its ability to partner ingredients—chile and other spices, sauces, and marinades—making it a fantastic all-rounder. Often it is combined with shrimp, an Eastern surf 'n' turf experience that brings a freshness and vitality; our signature dish, wagamama *ramen*, a light, aromatic broth with noodles, chicken, shrimp, and crabsticks combined with vegetables, is a case in point. A meal in a bowl and very much the way of the noodle.

When buying chicken, seek out free-range and, if possible, organic birds. The extra cost should be reflected in the eating; a fuller, more rounded flavor and a firm texture. Chickens are among the most intensively farmed animals and some examples taste of little and come with a decidedly pappy texture. Alternatives include guinea fowl (slightly gamier in flavor and with a firmer flesh) and quail.

The same rules on shopping apply to duck, although the less good examples tend to be very tough and fatty. Seek out a decent supplier and stick to them.

Portion packs offer convenience, but at a price. A whole bird is not difficult to cut up and judicious use of the freezer will give you two meals for two people from one bird and a carcass for making stock. While breast meat is often heralded as being superior, both leg and thigh meat is often more moist and tends to deliver more flavor (see page 41).

When marinating chicken, you need to toss the meat gently in your chosen marinade so it combines. This is best done with your hands or, failing that, use a couple of wooden spoons so the flesh isn't bruised. For the restaurants, chicken is marinated and then sealed in bags to allow the flavors to develop. This technique works well at home too, and ensures efficient use of fridge space.

chicken tama rice

charbroiled chicken with oyster sauce and stir-fried vegetables

1 cup Japanese or other short-grain rice
2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
vegetable oil, for frying
salt and white pepper
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 teaspoon fresh ginger root, grated
1 large zucchini, sliced
15 *poku* mushrooms, sliced 1/4-inch thick
2 tablespoons *shaoshing* wine (see page 15)
2/3 cup water
1 teaspoon sugar
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
1 egg, beaten
2 teaspoons sesame oil

Cook the rice in a large pan of boiling water until tender. Drain and set aside.

Preheat the broiler or grill pan. Lightly oil the chicken breasts with vegetable oil, season and broil or grill for 4 minutes on each side, or until cooked through. Let rest for 5 minutes, slice on the diagonal, and set aside.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil. Add the garlic and ginger and stir-fry for 10 seconds. Add the zucchini and mushrooms and stir-fry for 1 minute. Pour in the wine and water, then bring to a boil. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt, the sugar, and oyster sauce.

Make a paste with the cornstarch and a little cold water. Then skim off 2 tablespoons of the liquid in the wok, mix with the cornstarch paste, return to the wok, and bring back to a boil. Add the egg to the sauce and cook until soft but don't let it curdle. Stir the sesame oil through it.

Divide the rice between 2 plates, place the charbroiled chicken breast on top, and pour the sauce over it.

chicken chili men

stir-fried chicken with green pepper, scallions, and noodles

10 ounces *soba* noodles

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut on the diagonal into 1/2-inch strips

1 green pepper, trimmed, seeded, and thinly sliced

1 small zucchini, thinly sliced

1/2 red onion, peeled and thinly sliced

4 scallions, trimmed and cut into 1-inch lengths

1 1/4 cups chili sauce (see page 27)

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes or until just tender. Drain thoroughly and refresh under cold water.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the chicken, pepper, zucchini, red onion, and scallions, and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes until the chicken is cooked and the vegetables are lightly colored. Add the chili sauce and bring to a boil. Divide the noodles between 2 bowls and top with the stir-fry.





cha han

stir-fried chicken and shrimp with corn, mushrooms, and fragrant rice

7 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thigh meat (see page 41)

2 tablespoons yakitori sauce (see page 37)

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

8 cooked, peeled shrimp

2 tablespoons canned corn, well drained

2 tablespoons snow peas, finely sliced

4 button mushrooms, finely sliced

2 scallions, trimmed and cut into 1-inch lengths

2 eggs, beaten

3 ounces cooked Thai fragrant rice

salt

2 tablespoons light soy sauce

miso soup and pickles (see page 46), for serving

Combine the chicken and the *yakitori* sauce in a bowl. Work gently with your fingers for a few minutes, turning the meat in the sauce. Marinate for at least 30 minutes (1 hour is even better). Remove the chicken, reserving the marinade, and cut the meat on the diagonal into thin slices.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the shrimp, corn, snow peas, mushrooms, and scallions, along with the chicken and stir-fry over medium heat for about 5 minutes until the vegetables just start to wilt and the chicken is cooked. Add the egg and continue to stir-fry until it is just scrambled.

Add the rice. Season with salt and soy sauce and continue stir-frying until everything is mixed evenly and the rice heated through. Divide between 2 bowls and serve with *miso* soup and pickles.

cha han is easily one of the most popular dishes on the menu. With lots of vegetables, its light seasoning of *yakitori* sauce, and ever-popular chicken and shrimp, the combination seems to be a winner with young and old alike —my son says it's definitely his favorite. All the preparation for this dish happens up-front. Cooking is really a matter of minutes and the whole assembly can be on the table in less than 20.

chicken ramen

charbroiled chicken and noodle soup with bok choy and bamboo

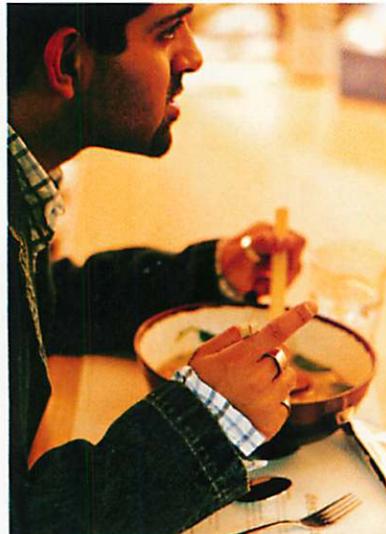
Combine noodles, hot stock, fresh vegetables, and lightly broiled chicken, and you have a complete meal in a bowl. Fast food really doesn't get better than this.

- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- vegetable oil, for oiling
- salt and white pepper
- 9 ounces *ramen* noodles
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable stock (see pages 17 and 18)
- 2 bok choy, trimmed and roughly chopped (or 2 handfuls of baby spinach leaves)
- 12 pieces *menma* (canned bamboo shoots), drained
- 4 scallions, trimmed and finely sliced

Preheat the broiler or grill. Lightly oil and season the chicken breasts and broil or grill for 4 minutes on each side, or until cooked through. Let rest for 5 minutes, slice on the diagonal, and set aside.

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain, refresh under cold running water, and divide between 2 bowls.

Heat the chicken or vegetable stock until boiling. Put the bok choy on top of the noodles and ladle in the stock. Top with the sliced chicken, *menma*, and scallions.



“
Thank you. I am a devoted fan. Could you please send me the recipe for chicken ramen. I could eat it forever!
Trey, USA”

ginger chicken teppan

stir-fried chicken and noodles with chile, cilantro, and ginger

7 ounces *udon* noodles

handful of snow peas, finely sliced

1/2 red onion, peeled and thickly sliced

4 scallions, trimmed and cut into 1-inch lengths

1 garlic clove, peeled and finely sliced

1 tablespoon fresh ginger root, peeled and grated

2 tablespoons roughly chopped cilantro (coriander leaves)

1 red chile, seeded and finely sliced

2 handfuls of bean sprouts

3 tablespoons *tsuyu* sauce (see page 36)

2 eggs, beaten

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

10 1/2 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thigh meat, cut into strips

2 teaspoons pickled ginger (*gari*, see page 14), for scattering

6 sprigs of cilantro, for garnishing

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes or until just tender. Drain and refresh under cold running water. Put all the ingredients except the oil, chicken, pickled ginger, and cilantro sprigs in a large bowl, adding in the noodles last, and mix to combine.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the chicken and stir-fry for 5 minutes, or until cooked. Add everything from the bowl and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes. Check the seasoning, then divide the stir-fry between 2 plates and scatter the pickled ginger and cilantro sprigs on top.



Bean sprouts may not major on the flavor front, but their crunchy texture is a key aspect in many stir-fry dishes and salads.

When it comes to "the way of the noodle" the idea is to make slurping noises while eating—the extra oxygen enhances the flavour of the dish. The truth is it is very difficult to eat noodles with chopsticks and not slurp. Napkins are to be advised and reducing the distance from bowl to mouth also helps. In Japan, the bowl is often held up close to the face and is the reason why the bowls are not made from china—they would simply get too hot.

chicken and shrimp hot pot

with tofu, mushrooms, and soy sauce

This recipe is a real reviver—soothing, comforting, and gentle. A reminder of how very subtle and delicate Japanese food can be.

- 2½ cups *dashi*, made with *dashi no moto* (see page 14) according to package instructions
- 2 tablespoons sake
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce
- pinch of salt
- 2 teaspoons *mirin* (see page 14)
- 8 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thigh meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 shiitake mushrooms, roughly chopped
- 2 Chinese cabbage (napa cabbage) leaves, cut into 1-inch-wide strips
- 4 scallions, trimmed and cut into ¾-inch lengths
- 5 x 1-inch cubes firm tofu
- 9 ounces white *ramen* noodles
- small bunch of Chinese chives
- 4 cooked tiger shrimp, unpeeled

Put the *dashi*, sake, soy sauce, salt, and *mirin* in a pan and bring to a boil. Add the chicken, cover, and lower the heat. Simmer for 3 minutes until the chicken is almost cooked through. Add the remaining ingredients, except for the shrimp, and cook for another 2–3 minutes. Remove from the heat, add the shrimp, and set aside for 2 minutes to heat the shrimp through. Divide between 2 bowls.

Central to wagamama is the idea of a long kitchen and bench seating which is perpendicular to it. It means food can be delivered quickly without any fuss. This broke away from the traditional concept of a restaurant kitchen and dining room being separate elements—the constant noise and buzz of the kitchen is all part of the wagamama experience.





teriyaki chicken stir-fry

with chile, garlic, scallion, and rice

- 9 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breast or thigh meat (see page 41),
sliced into ½-inch strips**
- 1 red chile, trimmed and finely sliced**
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste (homemade or store-bought)**
- ¼ cup teriyaki sauce, homemade (see page 28) or store-bought**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 4 ounces bean sprouts**
- ½ red onion, peeled and thickly sliced**
- ½ red pepper, trimmed, seeded, and cut into strips**
- 3 ounces bok choy, cut in half**
- pinch of salt**
- pinch of sugar**
- 1 scallion, trimmed and finely sliced on the diagonal, for garnishing**
- cooked plain boiled rice, for serving**

Place the chicken, chile, garlic paste, and teriyaki sauce in a large bowl or clean plastic bag and mix thoroughly. Cover and marinate in the fridge for 2–3 hours.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the oil. Add the chicken and any marinade from the bowl, and stir-fry for about 5 minutes until all the meat is golden. Continue cooking for another minute, then add the bean sprouts, red onion, red pepper, and bok choy.

Stir-fry for another 2 minutes, ensuring the bottom of the wok doesn't burn (you can add a teaspoon of water during this time to take some of the heat out of the wok). Season to taste with salt and sugar. Divide between 2 plates, top with scallion slices, and serve with the rice.

positive eating and living drives the menu and defines what wagamama is all about. Wagamama means wilfulness or selfishness: selfishness in terms of looking after oneself, looking after oneself in terms of positive eating and positive living. Before wagamama, fast food implied a compromise. The idea of providing well-cooked, well-presented nutritious meals prepared to order in comfortable surroundings had never been achieved on this scale before.

yaki udon

stir-fried chicken with shiitake mushrooms, leek, and red pepper

7 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thigh meat (see page 41)

2 tablespoons *yakitori* sauce (see page 37)

7 ounces *udon* noodles

1 egg

2 tablespoons *yaki soba* sauce (see page 32)

2 tablespoons curry oil (see page 19)

4 shiitake mushrooms, sliced

3 ounces leeks, finely chopped

5 ounces bean sprouts

1 red pepper, trimmed, seeded, and cut into thin sticks

6 x 1/4-inch pieces mini *chikuwa* (see page 14)

4 cooked and peeled shrimp

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 tablespoons dried shallots

1 tablespoon spicy fish powder (see page 15)

1 teaspoon pickled ginger (*gari*, see page 14)



Combine the chicken and the *yakitori* sauce in a bowl. Work gently with your fingers for a few minutes, turning the meat in the sauce. Set aside for at least 30 minutes (1 hour is even better). Remove, reserving the sauce, and cut the chicken into thin slices.

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes or until just tender. Drain and refresh under cold running water. Crack the egg into a large bowl and beat in the *yaki soba* sauce and curry oil. Toss in all the vegetables, *chikuwa*, shrimp, and noodles, and mix until thoroughly combined.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the oil. Add the chicken and any remaining sauce and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes or until cooked. Add the egg and vegetable mixture and stir-fry for 4–5 minutes until everything is just tender. Divide between 2 plates and top with the shallots, fish powder, and pickled ginger.

Marinating chicken gives the meat much more flavor and the dish overall, a much "bigger" taste. By far the best way to do this is to make up the marinade and place it in a plastic bag with the meat. Massage gently with your hands and set aside in a cool place, overnight if possible.

wagamama ramen

seasonal greens with shrimp, crabstick, tofu, and chicken

If we have a signature dish, this is probably the one. Universally popular, it epitomizes what wagamama is all about. Simple ingredients simply prepared yet delivering oodles of flavor in a nutritious way. This is one of the all-time favorites, a take on the classic noodle dishes eaten at stalls throughout Japan and the inspiration for the first wagamama restaurant.

5 ounces firm tofu

vegetable oil, for frying

9 ounces ramen noodles

4 slices kamaboko-aka (see page 14)

4 crabsticks

1 egg, hard-boiled

4 cooked and peeled shrimp

2 bok choy, roughly chopped

4 cups chicken stock (see page 17)

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

salt and white pepper

12 pieces menma (canned bamboo shoots), drained

1 tablespoon wakame (see page 15), soaked in warm water for 5 minutes, drained, and roughly chopped

2 scallions, trimmed and finely sliced

Cut the tofu into ½-inch slices and pan-fry in a little oil for about 1 minute on each side until just colored.

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes or until just tender. Drain, refresh under cold running water and drain again. Divide between 2 bowls along with the kamaboko-aka, crabsticks, tofu, half an egg each, 2 shrimp each, and the bok choy.

Bring the chicken stock to a boil. Preheat the broiler or a grill pan. Lightly coat the chicken breasts in vegetable oil, season with salt and white pepper, and broil or charbroil for 4 minutes each side or until cooked. Let rest for 5 minutes and slice on the diagonal into ½-inch strips.

To serve, pour the chicken stock over the noodles, lay the chicken strips on top, and garnish with the menma, wakame, and scallion slices.





Wagamama

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miso ramen

miso soup with chicken, leek, bamboo shoots, and ramen noodles

Miso is a magical food. Made from soybeans and grain, it is similar to yogurt in having living enzymes and has an almost mystical status in Japanese cuisine. There are several different types but personal preference should be the deciding factor. Experiment until you find one you like.

9 ounces *ramen* noodles
4 cups chicken stock (see page 17)
4 ounces miso paste (see page 19)
5 ounces boneless, skinless chicken, cut on the diagonal
into strips 1/2-inch wide
1 egg, beaten
1 tablespoon cornstarch
salt and white pepper
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
1 small carrot, peeled and shredded
1/2 leek, finely sliced
large handful of bean sprouts
2 teaspoons sugar
2 tablespoons light soy sauce
12 pieces *menma* (canned bamboo shoots), drained
handful of *wakame* (see page 15), soaked in warm water
for 5 minutes, drained, and roughly chopped
1 teaspoon chilli oil
1 teaspoon sesame seeds, toasted (see page 164)



Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes or until just tender. Drain and refresh under cold running water. Place the stock in a pan and bring to a boil. Whisk in the *miso* paste until free of lumps. Cover and remove from the heat.

Combine the chicken, egg, cornstarch, and a seasoning of salt and pepper.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking, and add the vegetable oil. Add the garlic, stir-fry for 5 seconds, then add the chicken, carrot, leek, and bean sprouts and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes or until slightly caramelized. Add 1 teaspoon salt, the sugar, and soy sauce, and cook for 1 minute.

Divide the noodles between 2 bowls and ladle the stock over them. Top with the vegetables, *menma*, *wakame*, chili oil, and sesame seeds.

Preparation is the key to cooking the food in this book. Lots of chopping and organizing before the cooking actually takes place. This can mean ingredients lists look long, but you'll already have a lot and what you do need to buy is generally easy to carry home. A good cutting board and sharp knife are essential, but these few utensils mean there is very little to wash afterwards.

chicken rice noodles

with chile and coconut ginger sauce

- 4 ounces rice noodles
- 1½ cups coconut ginger sauce
(see page 25)
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 7 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut on the diagonal into strips ½-inch wide
- 2 red chiles, trimmed, and finely sliced
- 1 small onion, peeled and roughly chopped
- handful of bean sprouts
- ½ red pepper, trimmed, seeded, and finely sliced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons light soy sauce
- few sprigs of cilantro, for garnishing
- 1 lime, cut in half, for serving



Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain and return to the saucepan. Stir in the coconut ginger sauce. Toss well to coat the noodles in the sauce. Cover with a clean dishtowel and set aside.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the chicken and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes or until just cooked through. Add the chiles, onion, bean sprouts, and red pepper and continue to stir-fry for another 3 minutes or until the vegetables are beginning to soften. Season with salt, sugar, and soy sauce and continue to stir-fry for another minute.

Divide the noodles between 2 bowls and top with the stir-fry and the cilantro. Serve with a wedge of lime.

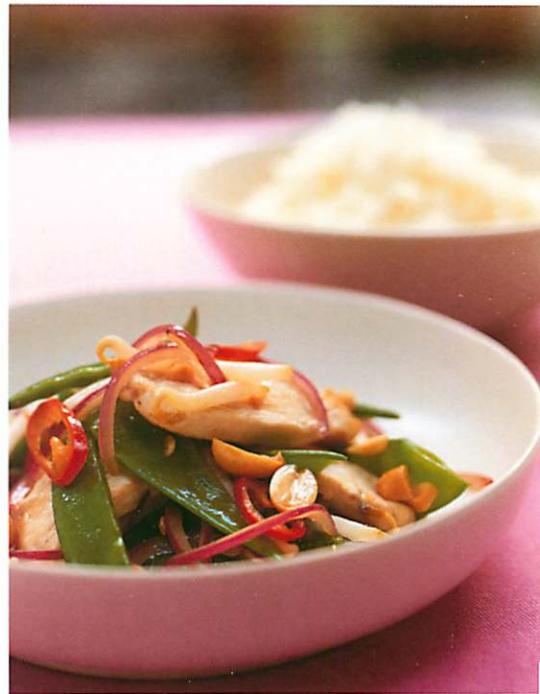
Using a wok is relatively easy, but practice is a good idea. Make sure it is well heated—best done over a medium flame for 1 or 2 minutes—then turn the heat up and add the oil, quickly followed by the first group of ingredients.

Stir-fries are an incredibly quick way to cook and the short time means all the ingredients retain most of their texture, flavor, and nutrients. The idea is to constantly toss the contents so they stir-fry rather than fry, which is why a large flame is needed to keep the heat as the ingredients move around the wok. You can substitute other poultry for the chicken or vary the vegetables depending upon what you have on hand. We are specific in the restaurants about what goes into a dish, but at home there is lots of leeway to experiment and extend the basic recipe.

marinated chicken stir-fry

with peanuts, lemongrass, soy sauce, and cilantro

- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut on the diagonal into strips $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wide
- 2 lemongrass stalks, tough outer leaves removed, very thinly sliced
- 2–3 red chiles, trimmed and sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce (see page 14)
- 1 small red onion, peeled and cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch strips
- 12 snow peas
- 2 handfuls of bean sprouts
- $\frac{1}{2}$ green pepper, trimmed, seeded, and cubed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salted peanuts, chopped
- 3 tablespoons light soy sauce
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups water
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- $2\frac{1}{3}$ cups steamed rice
- few sprigs of cilantro, chopped, for garnishing



Put the chicken strips, lemongrass, chile, garlic, 1 tablespoon of the vegetable oil, and the fish sauce in a large bowl. Mix thoroughly, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the remaining oil and the red onion. Stir-fry for 1 minute until lightly caramelized. Add the chicken and its marinade and continue stir-frying for 1 minute to seal the meat. Add the snow peas, bean sprouts, and green pepper. Continue stir-frying for another 2 minutes or until the vegetables start to wilt. Add the salt, sugar, and half the peanuts, and stir-fry for another minute.

Add the soy sauce and water. Mix the cornstarch with 2 tablespoons water to make a paste. Remove 2 tablespoons of the sauce from the wok, combine with the cornstarch paste, return to the wok, and toss well. Continue cooking for another 4–5 minutes until the sauce is thick and glossy.

Press the cooked rice into a cup and invert onto 2 plates. Spoon the stir-fry over it and scatter with the remaining peanuts and chopped cilantro.



zasai chicken gohan

stir-fried chicken with Szechuan vegetables, oyster sauce, and sesame oil

1½ tablespoons vegetable oil
7 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into strips
1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed
**1 ounce pickled cabbage, soaked in cold water for
15 minutes, then drained**
**1 ounce Szechuan vegetables (see page 15), soaked in cold water for
15 minutes, then drained**
4 shiitake mushrooms, sliced
4 scallions, trimmed and cut into 1-inch lengths
⅔ cup water
2 teaspoons sugar
1 tablespoon oyster sauce
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons light soy sauce
½ teaspoon cornstarch
pinch of white pepper
1 egg, beaten
2 teaspoons sesame oil
2⅔ cups cooked Japanese short-grain rice
2 teaspoons zasai chili sauce (see page 36)

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the chicken and stir-fry for 3 minutes or until it loses its color. Add the garlic and stir-fry for 5 seconds, then add the pickled vegetables, mushrooms, and scallions. Stir-fry for another 5 seconds and add the water, sugar, oyster sauce, salt, and soy sauce.

Bring to a boil and remove any froth with paper towels. Mix together the cornstarch with 1 tablespoon cold water, the white pepper, and egg, and, when smooth, add to the sauce to thicken. Bring almost to a boil and stir the sesame oil through it.

Divide the rice between 2 plates and add the stir-fried chicken. Top with the zasai chili sauce.

5

fish



Tsukiji market, the central fish market in Tokyo, is the largest fish market in the world. I've never seen so much tuna: rows and rows of both fresh and frozen with numbers slapped on to the sides. Quality is everything to the Japanese and some of these tuna are fetching serious prices; arm-waving, constant shouting, and lots of facial expressions do the communicating. I'm simply mesmerized by the fish.

The market is huge and when I tear myself away from the tuna there is everything else you can think of to view: sea bass and sea bream (porgy), salmon and squid, and every size of shrimp imaginable.

Fish is a key source of protein in the Japanese diet; for a small country surrounded by the sea, it was an obvious choice over land-demanding animals like cattle and sheep. At wagamama, we serve a total of over 2,200 pounds of shrimp, salmon, and crabsticks every week, a figure which keeps increasing.

Top of the list for our customers is the seafood *ramen*, a rich and satisfying broth with noodles and shrimp, crabsticks, and squid. It comes with *menma* (pickled bamboo shoots) and *kamaboko-aka*, a small fishcake. The addition of a pickle with fish is very traditional in Japanese cuisine. Alternatives include *gari* (pickled ginger) and *daikon* (white radish).

Many of the wagamama specials are fish based and the following chapter reflects this emphasis. Cod baked in foil, teriyaki sea bass, monkfish *yakitori*—all of these have at one time or another featured on the wagamama menu. But we have also included a few extras: the mackerel with soy and ginger (see page 115), for example, is a great way to serve this much underrated and very healthy fish, and the salmon hot pot (see page 108) is another homey, comforting dish not suited to the busy service needs of the restaurants but one which sits very firmly in the more robust style of Japanese home cooking.

notes on buying fish Freshness is everything when buying fish. Don't be afraid to prod and poke, to question and examine. Ask leading questions: "Is this fresh?" will invariably get a yes, whereas "How fresh is this?" requires a little more thought on the part of your fishseller. An increasing amount of fish we buy is now farmed; unless it states otherwise, this is largely true of most of the salmon, sea bass, and sea bream (porgy) on sale. Farmed fish can be excellent, but its quality can vary hugely and some of it is decidedly below par.

ebi yakitori

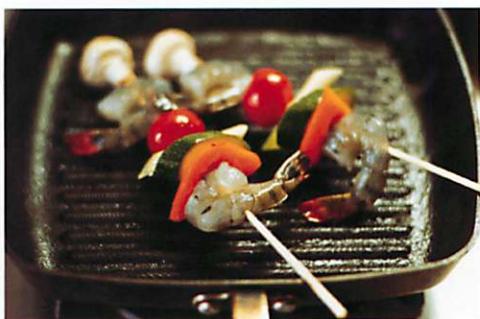
stir-fried vegetable skewers with grilled shrimp and dipping sauce

- 18 raw peeled shrimp
- 1 zucchini, cut into 1-inch slices
- 1 orange pepper, trimmed, seeded, and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 6 thick scallions, trimmed and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 6 button mushrooms
- 6 cherry tomatoes
- 1/4 cup *ebi kuzu kiri* sauce (see page 28)
- 4 ounces soba noodles
- 4 scallions, trimmed and finely sliced
- large handful of bean sprouts
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed with a little salt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 heaped teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 6 wooden skewers, soaked in cold water for 2 hours

Thread 3 shrimp on each skewer, alternating with 1 piece of zucchini, 2 pieces of pepper, 2 pieces of thick scallion, 1 mushroom, and 1 tomato. Brush with some of the *ebi kuzu kiri* sauce. Preheat the broiler or a grill pan and cook the *yakitori* for 3–4 minutes, turning frequently, until the shrimp are cooked through.

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain thoroughly, then combine in a large bowl with the finely sliced scallions, bean sprouts, garlic, salt, and sugar. Heat a large, heavy frying pan or wok and add the vegetable oil. Add the noodle mixture and stir-fry for 2 minutes until all the ingredients are combined and warmed through. Transfer to 2 plates and top with the cooked shrimp *yakitori*. Drizzle the remaining sauce over them.

It takes quite a while for a grill pan to reach optimal heat. Too hot, and everything will simply burn; not hot enough, and what you lay on top will stew and fail to pick up those attractive lines. Keep the heat medium to hot, and allow a good few minutes for it to reach temperature.





amai udon

stir-fried noodles with shrimp, tofu, and leek

14 ounces udon noodles
2 eggs, beaten
1/3 cup *amai* sauce (see page 22)
1 large leek, trimmed and finely sliced
6 cooked peeled shrimp
large handful of bean sprouts
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
4 ounces firm tofu, cut into 10 cubes
juice of 1 lime
2 tablespoons chopped roasted peanuts, for garnishing

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain, refresh under cold running water, and reserve.

Put the egg and the *amai* sauce in a large bowl and stir in the leek, shrimp, bean sprouts, and noodles. Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the tofu and stir-fry for 2 minutes or until starting to color.

Tip the contents of the bowl into the wok and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes until the egg is cooked and the leeks are softened.

Divide between 2 bowls, squeeze some lime juice over them, and scatter with the chopped peanuts on top.

Stir-fries are one of the most popular cooking methods in our house. My children enjoy the speed as well as the contents. What I really relish is everything tasting its best. Minimal cooking means the snow peas still have crunch as well as flavor, the carrots are still sweet as well as crunchy, and the shrimp have a succulence and sea-salty tang which delights. The lack of dishwashing afterwards also encourages me, but that is to dwell on the mundane.

ebi chili men

stir-fried shrimp with green pepper, carrots, and soba noodles

- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- pinch of white pepper
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 12 raw peeled shrimp
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 green pepper, trimmed, seeded, and cut into chunks
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced on the diagonal
- 1 1/4 cups chili sauce (see page 27)
- 9 ounces soba noodles

Combine the egg, sesame oil, white pepper, and cornstarch in a bowl, whisk to form a smooth mixture, and gently stir in the shrimp.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the green pepper and carrot and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes or until just tender. Add the shrimp, stir-fry for 30 seconds, then add the chili sauce and bring to a boil. Simmer for 2 minutes, remove from the heat and set aside while you cook the noodles.

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain and divide between 2 plates. Top with the shrimp and sauce.

Shrimp in their shells tend to deliver more flavor and texture than their iced-up shell-off cousins. Preparation is slightly more fiddly, but is not that onerous and you can always get somebody to work on this alongside you. If you sauté the shells in the vegetable oil and then discard the shells before you start cooking, it will enhance the flavor of the finished dish.



broiled sea bream (porgy)

with soy sauce and stir-fried garlic noodles

The tang of soy sauce partnered with the nutty, almost sweet flavor of sesame oil is more than a match for this meatiest of fish.

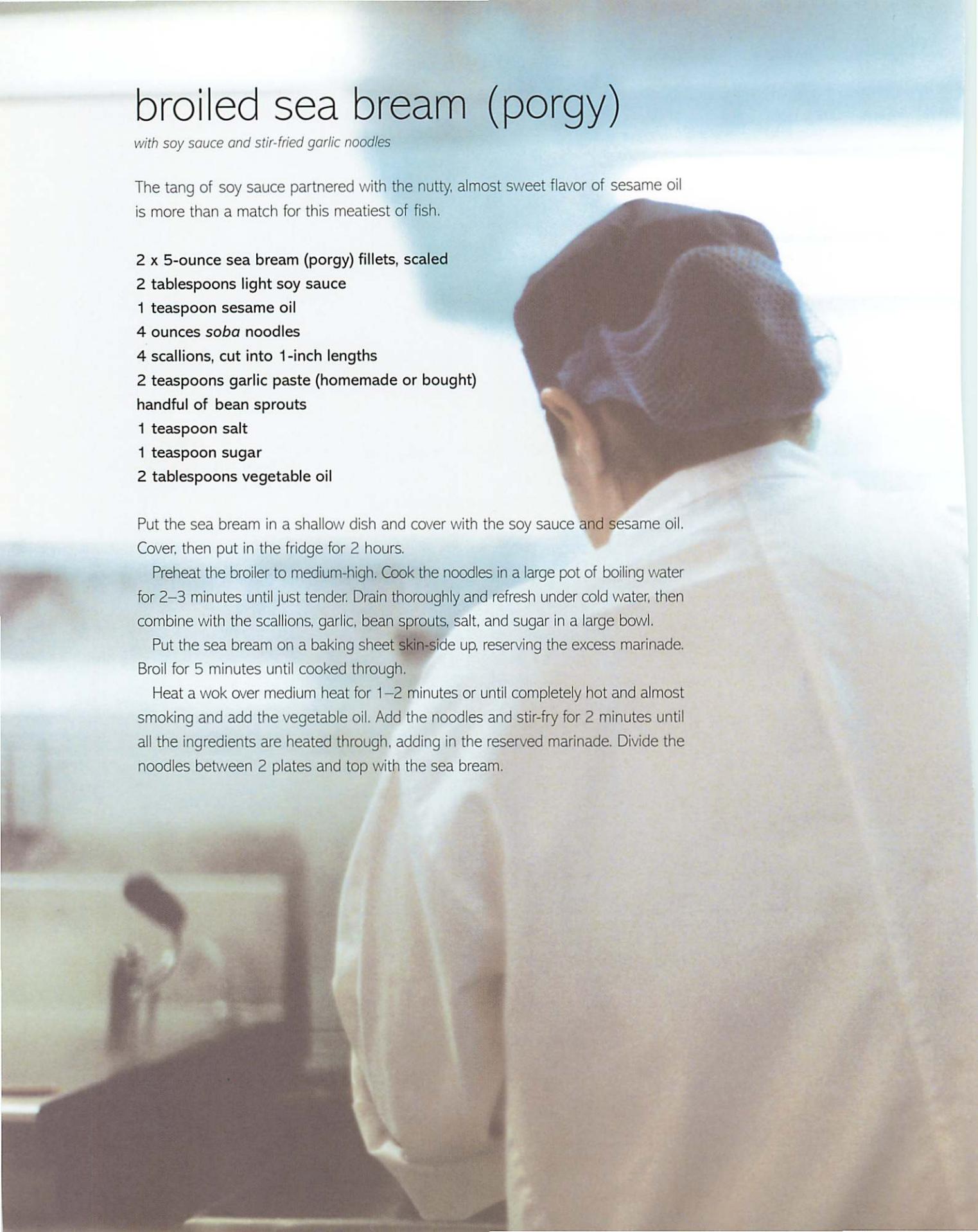
- 2 x 5-ounce sea bream (porgy) fillets, scaled
- 2 tablespoons light soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 4 ounces *soba* noodles
- 4 scallions, cut into 1-inch lengths
- 2 teaspoons garlic paste (homemade or bought)
- handful of bean sprouts
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Put the sea bream in a shallow dish and cover with the soy sauce and sesame oil. Cover, then put in the fridge for 2 hours.

Preheat the broiler to medium-high. Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain thoroughly and refresh under cold water, then combine with the scallions, garlic, bean sprouts, salt, and sugar in a large bowl.

Put the sea bream on a baking sheet skin-side up, reserving the excess marinade. Broil for 5 minutes until cooked through.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Add the noodles and stir-fry for 2 minutes until all the ingredients are heated through, adding in the reserved marinade. Divide the noodles between 2 plates and top with the sea bream.



grilled teriyaki sea bass

with mixed greens and garlic rice

**2 x 5-ounce sea bass (grouper) fillets, scaled
1/4 cup teriyaki sauce, homemade (see page 28) or bought
1 cup rice
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
pinch of salt
large handful of mixed salad greens
1 tablespoon shredded carrot or *daikon* (mooli)
1/4 cup garlic herb oil (see page 35)**

Place the sea bass fillets in a bowl with 2 tablespoons of the teriyaki sauce. Toss gently and set aside. Cook the rice in a pan of boiling water for 8 minutes (or according to the package instructions) until just tender, then drain.

Heat a grill pan until really hot and lightly oil with paper towels dipped in vegetable oil. Season the sea bass with the salt, then cook, skin-side down, for 2 minutes. Turn over and cook for 1 minute until done.

Press the rice into a cup and invert onto 2 plates. Combine the salad greens and carrot or *daikon*, and place a handful alongside the rice. Drizzle the garlic herb oil over it along with 1 tablespoon of the teriyaki sauce for each plate. Top with the sea bass and a little extra teriyaki sauce.

*For the love of God,
open a wagamama
in New York!*

Mike, USA

home-cured spiced swordfish steak

grilled swordfish, ramen noodles, and baby vegetables

Vegetables poached in a light stock, the gutsy flavor of just-cooked swordfish, and the soothing comfort of noodles. Simplicity at its best and everything tasting of itself; pure and easy.



2 scant teaspoons coarse sea salt or kosher salt
2 x 6-ounce swordfish steaks
pinch of ground black pepper
1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
1 red chile, trimmed, seeded, and sliced
2 sprigs of cilantro, finely chopped
1 tablespoon lime juice
4 cups vegetable stock (see page 18)
3 ounces baby vegetables (baby corn cobs, sugarsnap peas, or snow peas)
10½ ounces ramen noodles
a little vegetable oil
4 scallions, trimmed and sliced, for garnishing



Line a tray with plastic wrap, place half the salt on the plastic, and put the swordfish on top. Cover with the remaining salt, the black pepper, garlic, sliced red chile and cilantro. Pour the lime juice over it. Cover with more plastic wrap and place another tray with weights (or something heavy) on it and let it marinate overnight in the fridge.

The following day, heat the stock and cook the baby vegetables for 2–3 minutes or until tender. Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender, then drain thoroughly. Divide between 2 bowls and ladle the stock and vegetables over them.

Brush the salt mixture off the swordfish. Heat a grill pan, lightly oil it using paper towels dipped in vegetable oil, and cook the swordfish for 2–3 minutes on each side or until opaque right through. Slice the steaks, place on top of the noodles, and sprinkle the scallion slices on top.

Oil the grill pan lightly to avoid a kitchen full of smoke. Some fumes are inevitable, but the idea is to be able to see what you are doing and not be arguing with firemen.

fish is surely the ultimate fast food for those of us interested in real food: easy to prepare, quick to cook, and full of texture and flavor. No wonder this is the largest chapter in the book. Fish is an ingredient as friendly to a wok as a saucepan of hot broth, and up for marinating as keenly as being seared in a pan of hot oil.

poached cod with shiitake

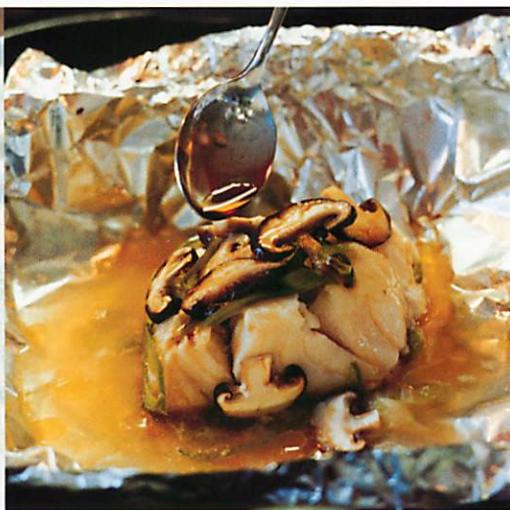
and soy sauce

2 tablespoons butter
5-ounce cod fillets
2 scallions, trimmed and finely sliced
1/4 green pepper, trimmed, seeded, and cut into thin strips
handful of shiitake mushrooms, finely sliced
1 tablespoon sake
salt and white pepper
2 teaspoons light soy sauce
2 x aluminum foil squares about three times the size of the cod fillets
for serving
mixed salad greens
steamed rice or bean thread vermicelli

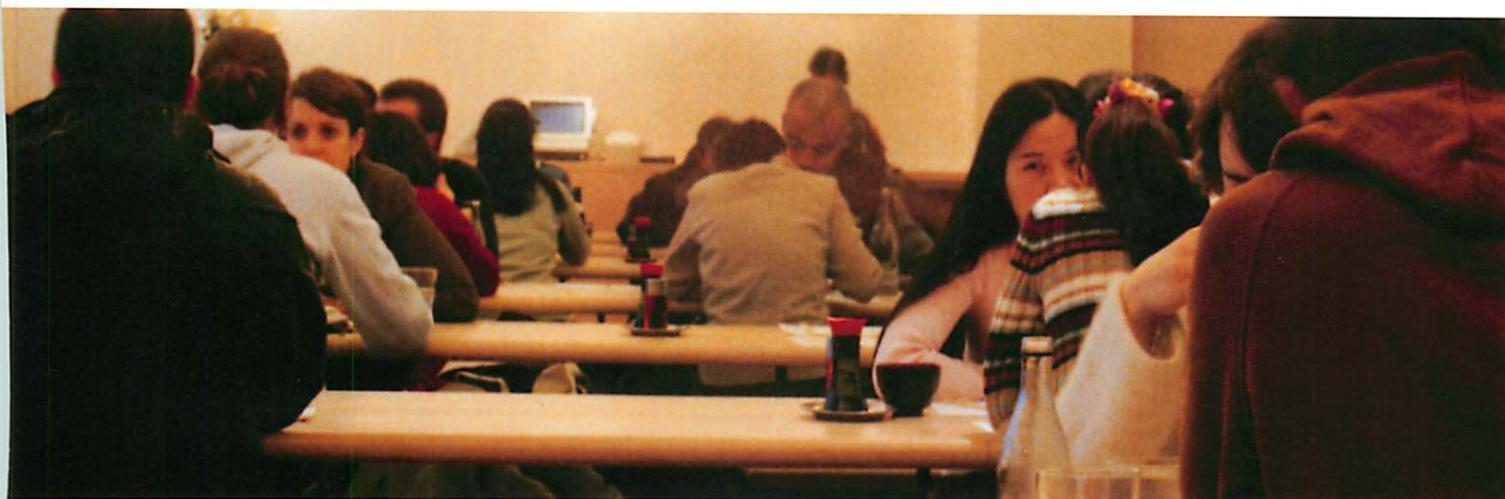
Preheat the oven to 400°F. Lay the foil squares on a board, shiny-side down. Using half the butter, grease an area just larger than the size of the cod fillets.

Put the cod on the foil, skin-side down, and top with the scallions, green pepper, and shiitake mushrooms. Dot with the remaining butter and the sake and season with salt and pepper.

Wrap the foil tightly to form a sealed package. Put in a roasting pan and pour in enough hot water to come half way up the sides. Place in the center of the oven for about 10 minutes, or until cooked. Open the foil packets carefully and drizzle in the soy sauce. Serve with a simple salad and steamed rice or glass vermicelli.



Butter, soy sauce and sake are a winning combination. They shouldn't work—butter is hardly an Eastern ingredient—but pry open the sealed tin-foil after cooking and you will be enveloped in a cloud of steam, heady with rich and exotic aromas.



sweet miso cod

grilled marinated cod, black sesame seeds, and seaweed rice

Miso lends this dish an unmistakably meaty quality making it somehow much bigger. Which miso you use in the dressing is a matter of personal preference. Experiment and see which one you prefer—they all contain subtle differences.

**2 tablespoons dried *wakame* (see page 15), soaked in warm water
for 5 minutes**

2 x 5-ounce cod fillets

4 fluid ounces sweet *miso* dressing (see page 35)

2/3 cup rice

a little vegetable oil

1/2 teaspoon black sesame seeds, for sprinkling

Drain the *wakame*, squeeze gently, and roughly chop. Set aside, for the garnish.

Put the cod in a shallow bowl and pour the sweet *miso* dressing over it. Place in the fridge for 1 hour or overnight if possible. Cook the rice in a large pan of boiling water until tender, then drain and keep warm.

Heat a grill pan until hot and lightly oil it with paper towels dipped in vegetable oil. Put the cod fillets on the grill pan and cook, skin-side down, for 5 minutes. Turn over and cook for another 2 minutes, or until opaque right through. The *miso* should be colored, but not black.

Divide the rice between 2 plates and sprinkle the black sesame seeds over it. Put the seaweed on top and finally the *miso* cod.

Bench seating and communal tables are hallmarks of wagamama. They make for a bustling, exciting atmosphere and lots of exchange. Regulars help newcomers and it allows groups to shrink and grow with ease.



kai sen udon

stir-fried seafood with oyster sauce and udon noodles

You can vary the seafood used here, but the shapes are half the fun: squid, shrimp, and scallops all lending their own texture and flavor wrapped up in a broth heady with the flavors of soy and sesame oil, garlic and oyster sauce.

14 ounces *udon* noodles
2 teaspoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
1 red pepper, trimmed, and very thinly sliced
12 baby squid, cleaned
4 uncooked peeled shrimp
8 bay scallops
12 slices of *chikuwa* (see page 14)
2 tablespoons *shaoshing* wine (see page 15)
2/3 cup water
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
1 tablespoon light soy sauce
2 ounces bok choy, roughly chopped
2 teaspoons sesame oil
1 crabstick, shredded, for garnishing
large pinch of crushed black pepper



Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain thoroughly, refresh under cold water, and set aside. Mix 2 tablespoons cold water with the cornstarch.

Heat a wok over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until completely hot and almost smoking and add the vegetable oil. Stir-fry the garlic for 5 seconds, being careful not to let it brown. Add the red pepper and stir-fry for 1 minute, then add the seafood and stir-fry for 30 seconds. Pour in the wine and water and quickly bring to a boil. Add the salt, sugar, oyster sauce, and soy sauce. Add the bok choy, then the cornstarch paste, and bring back to a boil—the sauce should have a coating consistency. Stir the sesame oil through it.

Divide the noodles between 2 plates and top with the contents of the wok. Top with the shredded crabstick and crushed black pepper.

Bok choy is widely used in dishes throughout this book. Like spinach, its leaves melt to a silky texture, but the stems add crunch and body. It keeps well in the fridge for 2–3 days.

smoked haddock ramen

with chives and baby vegetables

8 ounces smoked haddock

**1 tablespoon finely chopped Chinese chives (regular chives can be used,
though they lack the garlic kick of Chinese chives)**

large pinch of black pepper

9 ounces ramen noodles

4 cups miso soup (see page 46)

2 ounces babycorn

2 ounces zucchini

large handful of watercress

**1 ounce kombu (see page 14), soaked in warm water for
5 minutes and drained**

12 pieces menma (canned bamboo shoots), drained

It really does make sense to assemble all the ingredients for a recipe before you start. The cooking process is not helped if you are rushing around trying to find something while your wok catches fire! Take time over the preparation and all will follow in one seamless stream.

Put the haddock, skin-side down, in a pan. Cover with water, put on the lid, bring to a boil, and simmer for 5 minutes or until opaque right through. Gently flake the fish, removing any bones and skin, and discard the cooking liquor. Add the Chinese chives and black pepper.

Cook the noodles in a large pot of boiling water for 2–3 minutes until just tender. Drain thoroughly, refresh under cold water, and divide between 2 bowls. Heat the miso soup until boiling, then add the baby vegetables, and cook for 3 minutes, or until tender. Ladle the soup and vegetables over the noodles and top with the watercress and haddock, *kombu*, and *menma*.

smoked fish should be a dusty, elegant color, not strong and vivid. If you encounter the latter, it has probably been dyed. There is little reason for this beyond a perception that some customers prefer it. The color is hardly attractive and what is the point?