

March 7, 2007

Japan's Noodle of the Moment, From a Master

By FLORENCE FABRICANT

For the past few years, Sanuki udon, the long, thick, white noodle that is a specialty of the Kagawa region, has become the noodle of choice in Japan. Its appeal is its silkiness and toothsome quality, with a springy texture achieved when the wheat dough is kneaded underfoot.

Osamu Miyoshi, above, an udon expert, came from Japan to make noodles at Hakubai, the restaurant in the Kitano hotel, 66 Park Avenue (38th Street), last Tuesday. His udon will be cooked and served there through Sunday on a special menu, \$65 at dinner: (212) 885-7111.

Mr. Miyoshi's noodles are also sold raw and unfrozen, as well as frozen, under the Hinode brand in 10.5-ounce bags at Nippon Daido in White Plains, N.Y., for \$2.69, and at Mitsuwa Marketplace in Edgewater, N.J., for \$2.99.

Sunrise Mart, in SoHo and the East Village, sells Shirakiku brand, 21 ounces for \$3.99. The noodles should be cooked at a steady simmer for about 15 minutes. Rinsing them in cold water before adding them to soup makes their texture chewier.

In the Market: Water Chestnuts and Arrowheads in Chinatown

Fresh water chestnuts are so widely available in Chinatown, especially in winter, that there is no reason to use canned. And they cost only about \$2 a pound. Unpeeled, they keep for a week or more in the refrigerator. In "Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook: Recipes From Hunan Province" (W. W. Norton, \$29.95), Fuchsia Dunlop, the author, suggests deep-frying them and adding them to red-braised pork: pork belly chunks simmered with caramelized sugar, chilies, ginger, star anise, soy sauce and wine. Their refreshing crunch balances the richness of the pork.

A less common vegetable that some Chinatown markets have for \$4 a pound is arrowhead, far right, a tuber that looks like a pale water chestnut with a sprout poking out. A winter crop that is a specialty of Yunnan and Sichuan, it is named for the pointed leaves of the plant. The bulbs are peeled and usually steamed, or added to braised dishes. Arrowhead is starchy, suggesting a finely textured potato with a sweet hint of parsnip. It does not have to be limited to Chinese dishes. Thick slices can be deep-fried, turning golden and tender in less than five minutes.

One Good Dog Inspires Many Others

Willie was a mutt who loved hot dogs. His owners, Ellen Lutter and Tom Anderson, decided to honor his memory by naming their sliver of a hot dog store after him. At Willie's Dawgs, 351 Fifth Avenue (Fourth Street), in Park Slope, Brooklyn, Ms. Lutter and Mr. Anderson cook high-quality beef hot dogs and tuck them into outstanding house-baked challah, rye or multigrain rolls, adding assorted toppings (\$3 to \$4). Tofu and turkey dogs are also available, as are peanut butter sandwiches, crunchy onion rings, good fries, Yonah Schimmel knishes and a few desserts; (718) 832-2941.

The Professional Pull of Toffee

Laurie Pauker took things into her own hands when she could not find toffee that she liked. After a year of study she began making toffee sticks dipped in dark chocolate, with just the right balance of sweet touched with salt. She produces the toffee, which she named Lush, at a commercial kitchen set up for small entrepreneurs, Mi Kitchen Es Su Kitchen, in Long Island City, Queens. The toffee, in three- and five-ounce boxes, are about \$5 and \$7 at Mani Marketplace, and \$5.50 and \$9.99 at the Boyd's on Columbus Avenue, both on the Upper West Side; and \$5.99 and \$7.99 at Butterfield Market on the Upper East Side.

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