

# Culinary Culture of the Tango Region:

## The Charm and Art of Tango Barazushi

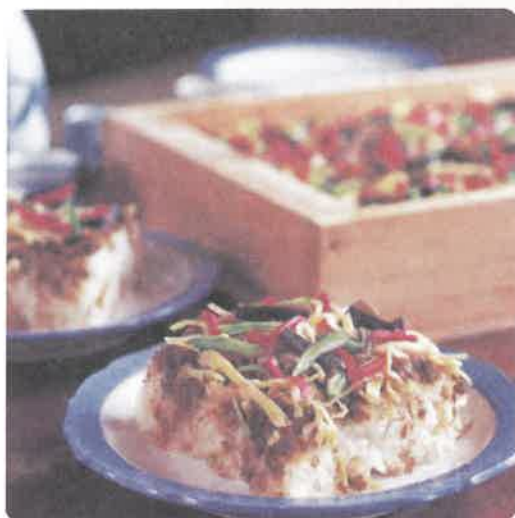
When most people think of sushi, they probably picture nigirizushi (hand-pressed sushi) or kaitenzushi (conveyor belt sushi). However, there are special kinds of sushi that are served at special occasions all over Japan, including some with a very different appearance. In the Tango region, many households make barazushi (layered sushi with various ingredients), which is then sold at local stores, restaurants, and lodging facilities.

This regional delicacy is prepared and enjoyed at special events like festivals and celebrations.

To prepare barazushi, a layer of sushi rice is first spread out in a shallow wooden box called matsubuta, onto which mackerel oboro (salty-sweet, stewed & minced mackerel) is placed. Various colorful toppings such as shiitake mushrooms, thinly cut strips of omelette, red ginger, fish cake, and seasonal vegetables are then added on top, culminating in an artistic dish that excels in both taste and presentation.

Only local ingredients are used, and these also change with the times and passing of the seasons. This is the secret behind the enticing flavors and charm of this dish.

Once complete, the dish is cut into portions with a spatula before being served. When making barazushi, it is important to aspire for delicious sushi that provides the eater with a taste of home, and this passion is at the very core of the tradition and appeal of Tango barazushi.



[Regional Cuisine] Japan is blessed with a rich culinary heritage and is home to a wide variety of regional delicacies. Thanks to the wisdom and ingenuity of locals, these dishes have been perfected to make the most of seasonal ingredients. They remind us of home and serve as symbols of the places we come from.

# Features of Tango Barazushi

## ① Use mackerel oboro.

Although most homes use canned mackerel to make oboro, grilled mackerel works just as well.

The mackerel is first minced into small pieces and then stewed in a sweet-salty sauce to remove moisture.



You can find locally canned mackerel at stores in the Tango region, including extra-large (370g) size cans that are rarely seen in other parts of Japan.

## ② Spread sushi rice in a matsubuta, add oboro, omelette strips, shiitake mushrooms, fish cake, red ginger, etc., and cut with a spatula.



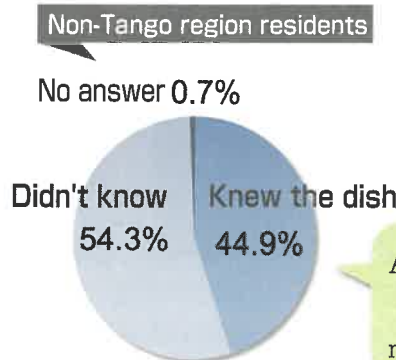
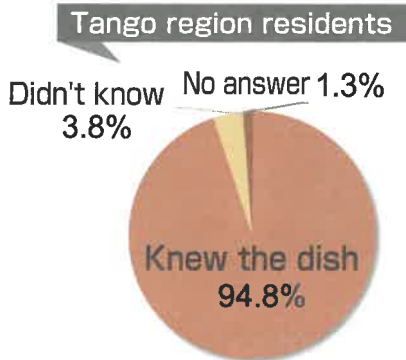
This local delicacy comes in a wide variety of flavors and styles, and each household and restaurant has their own unique techniques to create it.

These techniques are then passed on to the next generation by families, businesses, and organizations to ensure their preservation.

# Tango Barazushi Survey Results

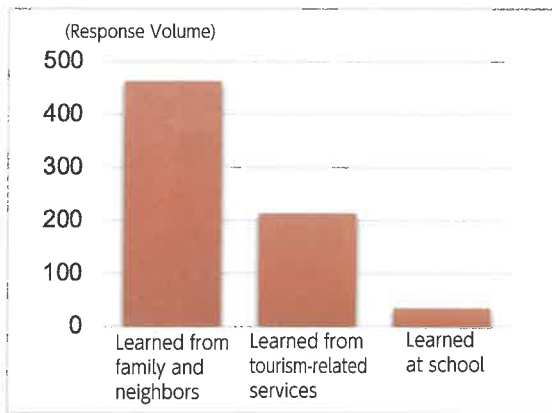
In order to understand the current cultural significance of Tango barazushi, the Kyoto Prefectural Tango Regional Museum held a survey (Oct. 2022-Jan. 2023) with the participation of museum visitors, Tango municipalities, and related associations. A portion of the survey results are presented in this pamphlet.

## ● Awareness



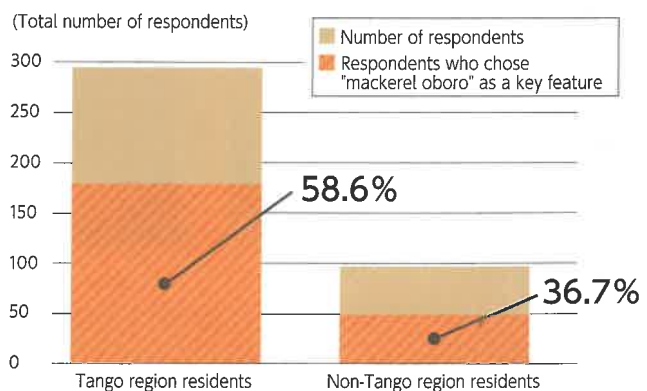
About 45% of non-Tango region residents knew the dish.

## ● How did you learn about Tango barazushi?



Some respondents learned about the dish at school.

## ● Features of Tango Barazushi

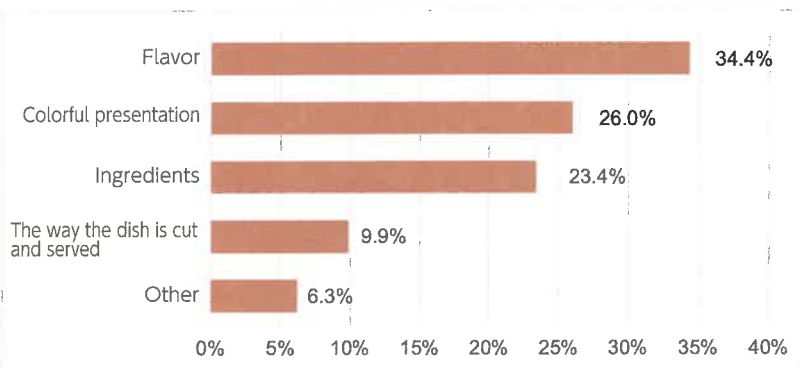


"Mackerel oboro" was the most common answer.

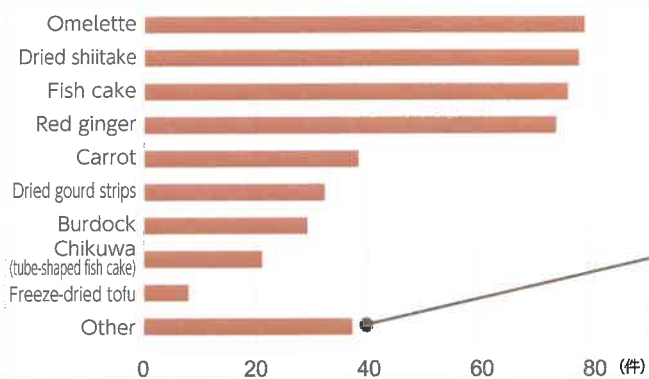
# Skill, Tradition, and History

## ● What do you find most appealing about Tango barazushi?

On top of being delicious and visually pleasing, much thought and creativity goes into the cutting and serving of this dish.



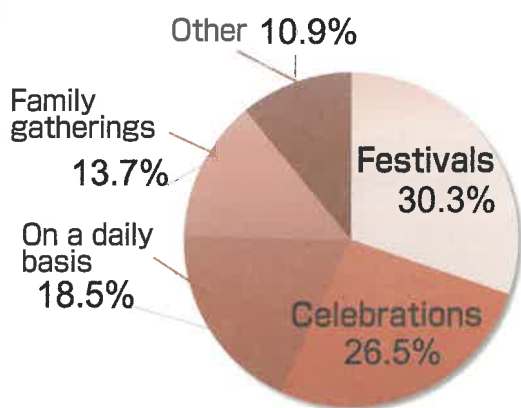
## ● Ingredients used other than rice



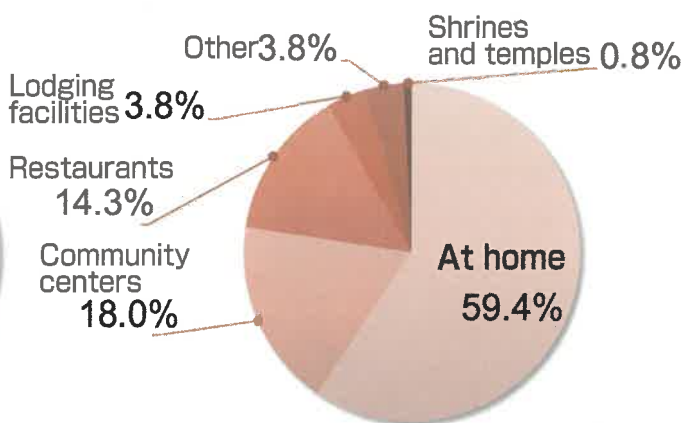
In addition to mackerel oboro, the omelette, dried shiitake mushrooms, fish cakes, and red ginger are essential ingredients, too.

Other answers included "seasonal vegetables" such as bamboo shoots, peas, green perilla, parsley, butterbur, dried royal fern, broccoli, rapeseed flowers, and Japanese ginger.

## ● When do you eat this dish?



## ● Where do you eat it?



About 70% of respondents eat barazushi during festivals, events, and celebrations, while about 20% eat it regularly. Furthermore, people are choosing to eat it at different places now, like restaurants (14.3%) and lodging facilities (3.8%), instead of at home or community halls.

## Attention to detail when making Tango barazushi

- Tango-grown koshihikari rice is used, and just the right amount of ingredients are added in between the rice so as to be visually pleasing when served.
- The oboro is cooked slowly and carefully so that the mackerel falls apart and is finished off with a subtle sweetness.
- The red ginger is specially handmade with natural ingredients.
- Each cook has their own ideal vinegar-to-rice ratio, method for chilling sushi rice, and serving techniques.

## Why does Tango barazushi continue to be such a popular homemade dish?

- Because it's delicious, visually vibrant, and pretty.
- The sweet and salty taste of mackerel oboro is unforgettable.
- Because people began to use canned mackerel after the local mackerel market declined during the economic boom in 1965.
- Canned mackerel made it easier to prepare the dish.
- Because it can be made using ingredients found in any season.
- Barazushi is still traditionally served at festivals and gatherings, but the cuisine has been adapted to be enjoyed on a daily basis.
- I used to make it at home about 40 years ago, but now I can buy it at the supermarket.
- Because it is taught in nutrition and cooking classes at school.
- Through the Healthy Eating Improvement Program, awareness is spread through cooking classes for children and men.

A matsubuta is a tool used to make barazushi. It was originally used in the region to transport mochi or udon, and is still used to this day. The matsubuta shown in the photo here was made in 1935 utilizing incredible craftsmanship.



## History, origin, and the unique features of how Tango barazushi is made and eaten

- Mackerel oboro is now made with canned mackerel instead of grilled, but it is said that grilled sea breams were used a long time ago.
- Water temperature should be recorded where mackerel are caught (fixed nets from Ine to Kyogamisaki on the Tango Peninsula).
- In the 1950s, there were regional differences, such as Nakagun sushi (with mackerel oboro and nothing mixed in vinegared rice) and Yosagun sushi (without mackerel oboro, like gomokuzushi).
- It is said that the Kitamae ship brought things from other regions to Tango, like kelp, dried gourds, and sugar.
- The Miyazu region's variation is called chirashizushi and the rice is also filled with various ingredients.



# [Tango Region]

Tango, in northern Kyoto, has flourished thanks to the many inlets and bays allowing trade with the rest of Asia and the Korean peninsula. There are many historical and beautiful sights, and the sea, villages, and mountains provide fresh delicacies like Taiza crab, Tango rice, and seasonal fruits.

Mackerel, a key barazushi ingredient, migrates north along the Tsushima Warm Current to the Tango Peninsula. Before refrigeration existed, these fish were grilled for preservation and then transported inland.



Tango is rich in foods from both the mountains and ocean, and is abundant with seasonal ingredients and food products.

|                            | Spring  | Summer   | Fall  | Winter   | Other<br>(can be used in any season)                              |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Mountain Delicacies</b> | Butterbur sprouts, aralia sprout, wild butterbur, spikenard, isaza goby, bracken, Fuchu butterbur, bamboo shoots, Japanese pepper, wasabi | Sweetfish, Japanese ginger   |   |  |   |
| <b>Village Delicacies</b>  |   | Sweet-potato vines, melon, watermelon                                    | Rice and rice ears, ginger, and fruits such as dried persimmons, 20th century pears, and grapes |  | Fruits  |
| <b>Ocean Delicacies</b>    | Squid, wakame seaweed, plate wakame seaweed, dried wakame seaweed, haba (edible brown algae), nagaramo (seaweed, red algae)               | Ugo or egonori (edible red algae), turban shell, and flying fish sashimi | Dried oval squid, sillago, sandfish, barracuda  | Female crab, crab, yellowtail, flounder, barracuda, wild seaweed, gubi (eelpout) | Japanese cockle, octopus, squid, jinba(sea grass), Iwagaki oyster |
| <b>Other</b>               | Bota-mochi (azuki bean covered mochi)   | Ankoro-mochi (sweet bean covered mochi)                                  | Rice cake, kakimame rice, chestnut rice, black soybean rice                                     |  |   |

# Passing Down Barazushi

## Passing down the tradition at home

I occasionally send Tango's barazushi ingredients to distant relatives and our daughter, who is a mother. These include mackerel oboro (essential for barazushi), sweetened dried shiitake mushrooms, homemade red ginger, fish cake, home-grown vegetables, and matching vinegar. We also tell them that scrambled eggs work just as well as omelette strips. This is to remind our families and friends of our colorful "Tango barazushi".

My aunt taught me how to make barazushi. Back then, it was common to measure vinegar for sushi rice in a cup or bowl, so it was always either sour or sweet, but I really enjoyed eating the ones I made. Though, once I started teaching barazushi to others, I had to learn how to make sushi rice with proper measurements. Because of barazushi, I went to many places, met many people, had many fun experiences, and learned many things. In the future, I hope to teach busy young people how to make quick and delicious barazushi while maintaining the traditional ingredients and techniques.

## Community efforts to pass on tradition at schools



## Efforts by chefs to pass down tradition at high schools



Making kelp soup stock

Making mackerel oboro

## Teaching the tradition in schools to benefit future generations

In local high schools, barazushi chefs teach students about regional cuisines. This encourages the young generation to develop new ideas using traditional dishes, which contributes to revitalizing the local community. Volunteer teachers in the Healthy Eating Improvement Program and Kyoto Shokuiku Teachers also teach at local elementary and middle schools.



Explaining how to make sushi rice

# Efforts to Promote Barazushi



2009 Kyotango Food Festival



Enthusiastic town meeting in 2023

[In collaboration with]

Asano Shokudo, Itotome, Umeya Honpo, Kaya Farmers Rice, Kyotango Yado Okamisan Association, Kyotango City Tourism Association, Kyotango City Dietary Improvement and Promotion Council, Kyotango Cram Schools, Kyoto Fishery Association Maizuru Branch, Super Nishigaki, Centrale Hotel Kyotango, Taniuchi Farm, Torimatsu, Connecting Tango with Barazushi Committee, Maruha Nichiro, Mizotani Ward, Monzen, Wada Lodge, Kyotango City, Ine Town, Miyazu City, Yosano Town and Board of Education, Kyoto Prefecture related organizations (titles omitted, in no particular order)

●(From Restaurant "T") In 1978, we added barazushi to the menu for the first time, but it "didn't sell well at all". In 1979, a barazushi food stall was held at the Tulip Festival under the name of the Food Industry Union. In 1986, I opened my first store in a Tokyo department store, and it "sold like hotcakes". This is all thanks to our ancestors, who nurtured our culinary heritage. I am truly grateful to be able to carry on this tradition.

## ●History

2009: "Barazushi making" experience at the Kyotango Food Festival

2010: Seminar on food and agriculture cooperation, "Talking about Tango's local cuisine, Barazushi"

Jan 26, 2012: "Tango Ajiwai Gourmet Promotion Committee's 4th Meeting: Connecting Tango with Barazushi" held

Aug 23, 2012: Start of the Association for Connecting Tango with Barazushi

Jan 26, 2023: "Town Meeting on the Mystery of Tango Barazushi" held

## Barazushi related links

• A Tango specialty! Let's eat Tango Barazushi!  
Special Feature - Kyoto by the Sea



• Barazushi Kyoto Prefecture  
Our Local Cuisine:  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry and Fisheries



• Tango Barazushi Restaurant  
Information/Kyoto Prefecture  
Homepage



We would like to thank all those who participated in the surveys, interviews, and town meetings conducted as part of this project, as well as those who contacted us with valuable feedback and information.



2022

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Innovate Museum Project

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