

Reading and Talking

Valentine's "kamaboko"

It looks like a box of Valentine's Day chocolates. If you open it, you find pink hearts and small round things that look like chocolates... but they aren't chocolate. They are "satsuma-age" deep-fried fish cakes! You can buy them at Uoman (魚万), a 120-year-old "kamaboko" fish cake store in Nara Prefecture, or <<https://www.uoman.jp>>. There are boxes of three (756 yen), five (1,296 yen), or eight different bite-sized pieces (1,944 yen). You can also choose Western flavors like peanut butter, or Japanese flavors like "kinako" roasted soybean flour.

(91 words)

What do you think about giving "satsuma-age" deep-fried fish cakes as a Valentine's Day gift?

└I think it's great. / I think it's OK. / I think it's stupid. (→ How come you think so? / Do you have an idea for a new Valentine's Day present? / Do you like chocolate?)

Do you like "satsuma-age" deep-fried fish cakes?

└Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--What's your favorite way to eat them? / Have you ever cooked them with cheese? / Have you ever used them as fillings for sandwiches?)

└No, I don't. (--How come you don't like them? / Do you like "hanpen" soft white fish cake? / Have you ever eaten "tsumire" sardine meatballs?)

Do you sometimes buy yourself chocolate at an expensive chocolate store?

└Yes, I do. (--What's your favorite chocolate store? / Do you eat chocolate every day? / Have you ever bought chocolate that cost more than 5,000 yen?)

└No, I don't. (--Have you bought chocolate recently? / Do you sometimes buy desserts at a convenience store?)

(29 January, 2021)

More Information

Valentine's "kamaboko"

(Note: Last week we introduced sweet potato "yokan" as an unusual gift for Valentine's Day. Here is another non-chocolate gift.)

Uoman (魚万) is a 120-year-old "kamaboko" fish cake store in Nara Prefecture. Last year, it sold boxes of what looked like Valentine's Day chocolates, but there was something fishy! Yes, they were really candy-sized pieces of "satsuma-age" deep-fried fish cake. They sold well, so this year Uoman returns with new assortments for February 14.

The store offers two lines of deep-fried-fish-cake treats: Tesoro and Shouai. Tesoro has Western flavors and seasonings, while Shouai has Japanese-style varieties. Each line comes in boxes of three (¥756), five (¥1,296), or eight different bite-sized pieces (¥1,944). The Tesoro three-piece box has a pink heart-shaped fish cake, and two round candy-shaped fish cakes, one with peanut butter and the other with olive oil and basil. The Shouai trio are the pink heart-shape, and two round candy shapes, one seasoned with "kinako" roasted soybean flour and black sesame seeds, and the other with chestnut and pumpkin paste.

For more information, or to order these unusual Valentine's Day gifts, visit <<https://www.uoman.jp>>.

(187 words)

(29 January, 2021)

Reading and Talking

Valentine's ramen

Until February 17th, Korakuen (幸楽苑) ramen restaurants have Chocolate Ramen and White Chocolate Ramen for Valentine's Day. Chocolate Ramen has a soy sauce broth with cocoa oil, and White Chocolate Ramen has a salt broth with cream and cocoa oil. Chocolate Ramen has toppings and a thin bar of dark chocolate on top; White Chocolate Ramen has toppings and white chocolate. Both are 640 yen. You also get a free "Korakuenman" sticker that looks like a Lotte "Bikkuriman" chocolate sticker.

(84 words)

Do you want to try Korakuen's Chocolate Ramen and White Chocolate Ramen?

└Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Which one do you want to try? / Do you think chocolate-flavored sauce goes well with other noodles? / What do you think about chocolate-flavored miso soup?)

└No, I don't. (--Do you like hot chocolate? / Have you ever had chocolate fondue? / Have you heard of chocolate "takoyaki" octopus balls?)

Have you ever been to a Korakuen ramen restaurant?

└Yes, I have. (--Which Korakuen ramen restaurant did you go to? / Did you like it? / What did you have?)

└No, I haven't. (--Have you ever seen a Korakuen ramen restaurant? / Do you like "katame" firm noodle or "yawarakame" soft noodles? / Have you eaten gyoza dumplings recently?)

Which ramen broth do you like better, "shio" salt or "shoyu" soy-sauce broth?

└I like both. (--Which do you like better, miso or tonkotsu pork bone broth?)

└I like [XXX] better. (--How come? / Do you like "tsukemen" ramen?)

└I don't like either. (--Do you like ramen? / Do you like Nagasaki champon ramen?)

(29 January, 2021)

More Information

Valentine's ramen

Korakuen (幸楽苑) is a ramen restaurant chain with its roots in Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture. Its simple soy sauce broth and low prices made it popular, and there are now more than 450 branches mainly in the Tohoku and Kanto regions.

In 2019, Korakuen added Chocolate Ramen to its menu for Valentine's Day. The advertising tagline -- "We wouldn't promote it if it didn't taste good" -- was to reassure a doubtful public. Last year, Korakuen doubled the Valentine's celebration by offering both Chocolate Ramen and White Chocolate Ramen. Both varieties return this year. Chocolate Ramen (709 calories) has a soy sauce broth with cocoa oil, and White Chocolate Ramen (717 calories) has a salt broth that is thickened with cream and cocoa oil. Both have chopped green onion, "chashu" braised pork belly and "menma" seasoned bamboo shoot toppings. Chocolate Ramen also has grated ginger and a thin bar of dark chocolate on top; White Chocolate Ramen has butter and white chocolate.

The Valentine's ramens are available at Korakuen restaurants from January 28 to February 17. Both are ¥640, and they come with a free "Korakuenman" sticker that looks like a Lotte "Bikkuriman" chocolate sticker.

(197 words)

(29 January, 2021)