

Cool Down with Kuramoto Ice: Japanese Kakigori Becomes the Hottest Trend in America

アメリカ上陸！この夏注目
高品質のクラモトアイスで作る日本のかき氷



photo credit @kolibarsd

When was the last time you had shaved ice? For those who moved to the United States many years ago, it might have been at a childhood summer festival. Interestingly, in Japan, the cost of a single serving of shaved ice can now be around 1,500 yen, and at some places, nearly 3,000 yen. Despite these high prices, long lines and reservations are still common.

Although all shaved ice is generally referred to as "kakigori" in Japan, there are many diverse styles, and modern Japanese shaved ice has evolved into a dish distinct from those in other countries. The origins of shaved ice in Japan are said to date back over 1,000 years, but before the development of refrigeration technology, ice was a precious commodity. It wasn't until around 1900, when ice-making technology advanced, that shaved ice became popular among the general public. At the same time, shaved ice machines began to evolve, and over the course of about 100 years, the current trend of light, fluffy, melt-in-your-mouth shaved ice was established.

So, what sets Japanese shaved ice apart from those in other countries? First, the ice itself. Popular shaved ice stores in Japan consistently focus on the quality of the ice, with most using pure ice that has been slowly frozen over more than 48 hours. The typical style involves thinly shaving block ice with an ice shaving machine and topping it with homemade syrups, creams, and seasonal fruits. The flavors

are diverse: spring brings strawberry and cherry blossom, summer features mango and white peach, autumn offers chestnut and sweet potato, and winter includes chocolate, allowing for a year-round seasonal experience. Even non-shaved ice stores, like ramen restaurants looking to boost sales during the summer, find it a good match for their dessert menus, and pastry shops, whose peak seasons are winter holidays like Christmas and Valentine's Day, sometimes introduce shaved ice as a summer specialty to attract customers.

A successful example in the U.S. is KoLi Bar, part of the USA Yakyudori group in San Diego. They use pure ice blocks from Kuramoto Ice in Kanazawa, Japan, offering shaved ice of the same quality as in Japan. In July 2023, they were featured on Fox News, resulting in long lines every day and selling over 400 servings in a day. In other regions, food events often see long lines for shaved ice priced between \$12 and \$16, and more shops and restaurants are starting to offer it on weekends.

Since 2020, Kuramoto Ice has been distributed in many major cities across the U.S., making high-quality pure ice blocks, crucial for shaved ice, more affordable and accessible. It will be interesting to see whether kakigori will become as established in America as ramen, or evolve differently like the California roll did from its Japanese origins. We look forward to seeing how it develops.

皆さんはかき氷を最後に食べたのはいつでしょうか？アメリカ生活が長くなると子供の頃の夏祭り以来という方も少なくないかもしれません。そういった方々は日本で1杯のかき氷に1500円、店舗によっては3000円近い値段でも行列ができる事や、予約待ちになっている状況に驚かれるかもしれません。

一言にかき氷と言っても実は多種多様なスタイルがあり、現在の日本のかき氷は他国のそれとは一線を画すカテゴリーに成長しています。日本でかき氷の起源は1000年以上も前と言われていますが、冷凍技術が発達する前の氷は貴重品であり、一般庶民にかき氷が普及し始めたのは製氷技術が発達した1900年頃。同時にかき氷機も進化し始め、約100年の時を経て現在流行りのふわふわした口溶けの良いかき氷のスタイルが確立されました。

では実際に他国のかき氷と何が違うのでしょうか？まずは使用する材料の氷。日本で流行っているかき氷専門店では例外なく氷に拘っており、48時間以上かけてゆっくり凍らせた「純氷」を使用している店舗が殆どです。ブロック氷を専用の氷削機で薄く削り、自家製のシロップ、クリームや季節の果物などでトッピングするスタイルが定番。フレ

ーバーは多岐に渡り、春はイチゴや桜、夏はマンゴーや白桃、秋は栗やさつまいも、冬はチョコレートなど年中季節感を感じさせる提供ができます。専門店ではなくとも、夏場に売上の下がるラーメン店のデザートとしても相性が良く、洋菓子店も繁忙期はクリスマスやバレンタインなど記念日が集中する冬なので、夏の集客源として導入するケースも見られます。

アメリカの成功例としてはサンディエゴにあるUSA YakyudoriグループのKoLi Bar。石川県金沢市にあるクラモト氷業の純氷ブロックを使用し、日本と同じクオリティのかき氷を提供しています。2023年7月Fox Newsで放映されて以降連日行列ができ、最も忙しい週末は一日で400杯以上も売り上げました。他地域でもフードイベントで12~16ドルのかき氷に長蛇の列ができたり、週末限定で提供する店舗も増えてきました。

2020年からクラモトアイスが全米の多くの主要都市で流通される様になり、かき氷にとって最も重要な高品質な純氷ブロックが手頃な価格で手に入りやすくなりました。今後アメリカで「Kakigori」がラーメンの様に定着していくのか、カリフォルニアロールの様に日本の原型とは違った進化を遂げていくのか、これからの展開に目が離せません。

Testimonial Spotlight: Why Our Customers Love Shaved Ice

- Q: What is the merit of adding Shaved Ice to the Menu?
Ebata-san: Adding Kakigori to the menu has increased the number of customers visiting the restaurant.
- Q: What was the reason for choosing Kuramoto Ice?
Ebata-san: Price, quality, and ease of use.
- Q: Ramen shops are often seen as time-sensitive and focused on turnover rates. What prompted you to add shaved ice to the menu?
Ebata-san: Ramen Boys has a large capacity, so we never had to worry about that.
It might not be suitable for smaller, busier establishments.
- Q: How well-known is "Kakigori" in the US?
Ebata-san: Honestly, the recognition of "Kakigori" is quite low! On our menu, we list it as Kakigori (Japanese Shaved Ice).
- Yosuke Ebata
Executive Chef, Ramen Boys IG: ramenboysl



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