



# 蕎麦 SOBA 麦



Soba, or buckwheat noodles, is as important to Japanese food culture as sushi and tempura among Japanese. And, along with these other dishes, soba is representative of food that Japanese love with a passion.



**Ina City, the birthplace of Shinshu Soba**



Cherry Blossoms at Takato Castle Site Park

# Ina City, the birthplace of Shinshu Soba

## "Ina City is famous for sakura and soba"



Takato Soba

Shinshu (Nagano Prefecture) is the soba representative of Japan.

Ina City has a high altitude (600 to 3000 m above sea level) and a large temperature difference between day and night. Because Ina has a soil suitable for soba cultivation, it has been renowned since ancient times for its high-quality soba harvest.

Soba grows even in nutrient-poor soil, and it can be harvested in about two and a half months, or 75 days, after seeding. When the seeds are sown in August, white flowers will bloom in September, and the soba can be harvested in mid-October before the severe winter comes.

For those living in the mountains where rice cultivation is impossible, soba was a staple of nutrition that enabled these populations to survive the harsh winter.

Shinshu soba spread to the rest of Japan via Masayuki Hoshina, the soba loving lord of the Takato clan in Ina City during the Edo period.

Hoshina was the illegitimate son of the second shogun, but he was later known as a ruler of virtue after performing a number of goodwill deeds for the Edo shogunate.

Hoshina loved Takato Soba, and the "Omotenashi" (hospitality) of the region so much, that he made a point to bring the soba everywhere he was transferred: Mogamiyamagata, Aizuwakamatsu, and Edo, thus spreading the culture of soba nationwide.

The history of soba is very old. It is said to have been cultivated around the 10th century BC (Jomon Period). The word "soba" first appears in written history in 722, about 1,300 years ago.

The history of Shinshu soba is traced back to the Nara period, with the mountain ascetic and founder of Shugendo (unity of Mountain Religion and Buddhism) named En no Ozunu. This ascetic passed through the Tousando pathway from the capital of Nara, and established the first training site at Mt. Nishi-Komagatake in "Shinano no kuni" (Nagano Prefecture).

At this time, he was so well taken care of by the villagers of Uchinokaya, at the foot of the mountain, that he gave them a handful of soba seeds in gratitude. He taught them how to grow soba that can be harvested even in harsh environments.

The seeds of this gyojya, or ascetic, soba harvested in Ina were spread to other mountain villages by mountain ascetics. This is the reason why the places where delicious soba is grown corresponds with famous mountain worship sites.

A monument dedicated to "The birthplace of gyojya soba" has been built in Uchinokaya, and the Gyojya Soba Festival is held here every year, drawing many visitors from inside and outside the prefecture. (The Gyojya Soba Legend)



**When you visit Japan, please come to Ina City, the birthplace of Shinshu soba, where you can enjoy a dish steeped in local history.**

**We are waiting for you from the bottom of our hearts.**



**Contact**

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