

## EATING

### top picks

- Omen (p134)
- Den Shichi (p128)
- Kane-yo (p126)
- Karako (p135)
- Grotto (p133)
- Aunbo (p129)
- Uosue (p122)
- Ganko Zushi (p123)
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- Café Bibliotec HELLO! (p126)

Kyoto is one of the world's great food cities. In fact, when you factor in atmosphere, service, quality and price, we reckon that you can eat better here for less money than in some of the more famous food cities, such as Paris and New York.

First off, Kyoto is the place to make a full exploration of Japanese cuisine – you can start with familiar dishes such as tempura and sushi and then head off into unknown territory with all kinds of regional and speciality dishes. Then, if you tire of Japanese food, you can take a break with excellent French, Italian, Chinese and Indian cuisines.

Of course, you might be wondering how you'll order all this good stuff without any Japanese language skills. Are you going to have to invent some new form of culinary sign language or blunder around restaurants pointing to what your fellow diners are eating? On this point, we can put your mind at ease: an increasing number of restaurants in Kyoto have English menus for their foreign guests. Others have picture menus with photos of almost every item they serve. Still others have English-speaking staff. Thus, you can comfortably order whatever you want without any language difficulties whatsoever. You can also use the phrases and sample menus under Food & Drink in the Language chapter (p205) to help you.

## EATING IN A JAPANESE RESTAURANT

When you enter a restaurant in Japan, you'll be greeted with a hearty '*Trasshaimase!*' (Welcome!). In all but the most casual places the waiter will next ask you '*Nan-mei sama?*' (How many people?). Answer with your fingers, which is what the Japanese do. You will then be led to a table, a place at the counter or a tatami room.

At this point you will be given an *o-shibori* (hot towel), a cup of tea and a menu. The *o-shibori* is for wiping your hands and face. When you're done with it, just roll it up and leave it next to your place. Now comes the hard part: ordering. If you don't read Japanese, you can use the romanised translations in this book to help you, or direct the waiter's attention to the Japanese script. If this doesn't work there are two phrases that might help: '*O-susume wa nan desu ka?*' (What do you recommend?) and '*O-makase shimasu*' (Please decide for me). If you're still having problems, you can try pointing at other diners' food or, if the restaurant has them, dragging the waiter outside to point at the plastic food models in the window.

When you've finished eating, you can signal for the bill by crossing one index finger over the other to form the sign of an 'x'. This is the standard sign for 'cheque please'. You can also say '*O-kanjō kudasai*'. Remember there is no tipping in Japan and tea is free of charge.

When leaving, it is polite to say to the restaurant staff, '*Gochisō-sama deshita*', which

means 'It was a real feast'. The Language chapter (p205) contains more useful restaurant words and phrases.

## RESTAURANT TYPES

### Shokudō

A *shokudō* (Japanese-style cafeteria/cheap restaurant) is the most common type of restaurant in Japan, and is found near train stations, tourist spots and just about any other place where people congregate. Easily distinguished by the presence of plastic food displays in the window, these inexpensive places usually serve a variety of *washoku* (Japanese dishes) and *yōshoku* (Western dishes).

At lunch, and sometimes dinner, the easiest meal to order at a *shokudō* is a *teishoku* (set-course meal), which is sometimes also called *ranchi setto* (lunch set) or *kōsu*. This usually includes a main dish of meat or fish, a bowl of rice, miso soup, shredded cabbage and some *tsukemono* (Japanese pickles). In addition, most *shokudō* serve a fairly standard selection of *dōnburī-mono* (rice dishes) and *menrui* (noodle dishes). When you order noodles, you can choose between *soba* (thin brown buckwheat noodles) and *udon* (thick white wheat noodles), both of which are served with a variety of toppings. If you're at a loss as to what to order, simply say '*kyō-no-ranchi*' (today's lunch) and they'll do the rest. Expect to spend from ¥800 to ¥1000 for a meal at a *shokudō*.

See p206 and p207 for sample menus of the various rice and noodle dishes available at *shokudō*.

## Izakaya

An *izakaya* is the Japanese equivalent of a pub. It's a good place to visit when you want a casual meal, a wide selection of food, a hearty atmosphere and, of course, plenty of beer and sake. When you enter an *izakaya*, you are given the choice of sitting around the counter, at a table or on a tatami floor. You usually order a bit at a time, choosing from a selection of typical Japanese foods such as *yakitori* (skewers of grilled chicken and vegetables), sashimi and grilled fish, as well as Japanese interpretations of Western foods such as French fries and beef stew.

*Izakaya* can be identified by their rustic façades and the red lanterns outside their doors. Since *izakaya* food is casual fare to go with drinking, it is usually fairly inexpensive. Depending on how much you drink, you can expect to get away with spending ¥2500 to ¥5000 per person.

See p206 for a sample menu of *izakaya* fare.

## SPECIALITIES

*Kyō-ryōri*, or Kyoto cuisine, is a style of cooking that evolved out of Kyoto's landlocked location and age-old customs of the imperial court. The preparation of dishes makes ingenious use of fresh seasonal vegetables and emphasises subtle flavours, revealing the natural taste of the ingredients. *Kyō-ryōri* is selected according to the mood and hues of the ever-changing seasons, and the presentation and atmosphere in which it's enjoyed are as important as the flavour.

## Kaiseki

*Kaiseki* (Japanese *haute cuisine*) is the pinnacle of refined dining, where ingredients, preparation, setting and presentation come together to create a dining experience quite unlike any other. Born as an adjunct to the tea ceremony, *kaiseki* is a largely vegetarian affair (though fish is often served). One usually eats *kaiseki* in the private room of a *ryōtei* (traditional, high-class Japanese restaurant) or ryokan. The meal is served in several small courses, giving one the opportunity to admire the plates and bowls, which are carefully chosen to complement the food and seasons. Rice is eaten last (usually with an assortment of pickles) and the drink of choice is sake or beer. The Kyoto version of *kaiseki* is known as *kyō-kaiseki* and it features a variety of *kyō-yasai*, or Kyoto vegetables.

The best way to sample *kaiseki* is by booking a night in a Kyoto ryokan and asking for the breakfast/dinner option. Otherwise, you can enjoy *kaiseki* at restaurants such as Minokō (p129) and Ponto-chō Uan (p122).

A good *kaiseki* (see left) dinner costs upwards of ¥10,000 per person. A cheaper way to sample the delights of *kaiseki* is to visit a *kaiseki* restaurant for lunch. Most places offer a boxed lunch containing a sampling of their dinner fare for around ¥2500.

Unfortunately for foreigners, *kaiseki* restaurants can be intimidating places to enter. If possible, bring a Japanese friend or ask a Japanese-speaker to call ahead and make arrangements.

See p206 for some useful *kaiseki* terms.

## Tofu-ryōri

Kyoto is famed for its tofu (soya bean curd); there are numerous *tofu-ya-san* (tofu makers) scattered throughout the city and a legion of exquisite *yudōfu* (bean curd cooked in an iron pot) restaurants – many are concentrated in Northern Higashiyama along the roads around Nanzen-ji (see p132) and in the Arashiyama area (see p136). One typical Kyoto tofu by-product is called *yuba*, sheets of the chewy, thin film that settles on the surface of vats of simmering soy milk. This turns up in many ryokan meals and *kaiseki* restaurants.

## COMMON CUISINE TYPES

### Yakitori

*Yakitori* is a popular after-work meal. *Yakitori* is not so much a full meal as an accompaniment for beer and sake. At a *yakitori-ya* (*yakitori* restaurant) you sit around a counter with the other patrons and watch the chef grill your selections over charcoal. The best way to eat here is to order several varieties, then order seconds of the ones you really like. Ordering can be a little confusing since one serving often means two or three skewers (be careful – the price listed on the menu is usually that of a single skewer).

A few drinks and enough skewers to fill you up should cost ¥3000 to ¥4000 per person. *Yakitori* restaurants are usually small places, often near train stations, and are best identified by a red lantern outside and the smell of grilled chicken.

For a *yakitori* sample menu, see p206.

# top picks

## CUISINE

- **Kushiage & kushikatsu** Kushi Hachi (p133)
- **Shokudō** Ayatori (p135)
- **Soba & udon** Omen (p134); Misoka-an Kawamichi-ya (p123); Tagoto Honten (p125); Hinode Udon (p135)
- **Sukiyaki & shabu-shabu** Mishima-tei (p122)
- **Sushi** Den Shichi (p128); Ganko Zushi (p123)
- **Tempura** Ōzawa (p130); Yoshikawa (p122)
- **Yakitori** Ichi-ban (p130); Daikichi (p131)

## Kushiage & Kushikatsu

This is the fried food to beat all fried foods. *Kushiage* and *kushikatsu* are deep-fried skewers of meat, seafood and vegetables eaten as an accompaniment to beer. *Kushi* means 'skewer' and if something edible can be impaled on one, it's probably on the menu. Cabbage is often eaten with the meal.

You order *kushiage* and *kushikatsu* by the skewer (one skewer is *ippon*, but you can always use your fingers to indicate how many you want). Like *yakitori*, this food is popular with after-work salarymen and students and is therefore fairly inexpensive, though there are upmarket places. Expect to pay ¥2000 to ¥5000 for a full meal and a couple of beers. Not particularly distinctive in appearance, the best *kushiage* and *kushikatsu* places are found by asking a Japanese friend.

You'll find a useful sample menu in the food glossary, p207.

## Okonomiyaki

The name means 'cook what you like', and an *okonomiyaki* restaurant provides you with an inexpensive opportunity to do just that. Sometimes described as Japanese pizza or pancake, the resemblance is in form only. At an *okonomiyaki* restaurant you sit around a *teppan* (iron hotplate), armed with a spatula and chopsticks to cook your choice of meat, seafood and vegetables in a cabbage and vegetable batter.

Most *okonomiyaki* places also serve *yaki-soba* (fried noodles) and *yasai-itame* (stir-fried vegetables). All of this is washed down with mugs of draught beer.

The food glossary, p208, will help you place your order.

hunched over steaming bowls of noodles. You can sometimes even hear a *rāmen* shop as you wander by – it is considered polite to slurp the noodles as you eat. In fact, aficionados claim that slurping brings out the full flavour of the broth.

You'll find some useful *rāmen* menu items listed in the food glossary, p207.

## Soba & Udon

*Soba* and *udon* are Japan's answer to Chinese-style *rāmen*. *Soba* are thin, brown buckwheat noodles; *udon* are thick, white wheat noodles. Most Japanese noodle shops serve both *soba* and *udon* in a variety of ways. Noodles are usually served in a bowl containing a light, bonito-flavoured broth, but you can also order them served cold and piled on a bamboo screen with a cold broth for dipping.

By far the most popular type of cold noodles is *zaru soba*, which is served with bits of *nori* (seaweed) on top. If you order these noodles, you'll receive a small plate of *wasabi* (spicy Japanese horseradish) and sliced spring onions – put these into the cup of broth and eat the noodles by dipping them in this mixture. At the end of your meal, the waiter will give you some hot broth to mix with the leftover sauce, which you drink like a kind of tea. As with *rāmen*, you should feel free to slurp as loudly as you please.

*Soba* and *udon* places are usually quite cheap (about ¥900 a dish), but some fancy places can be significantly more expensive (the décor is a good indication of the price).

See p207 for a glossary of *soba* and *udon* dishes.

## Unagi

*Unagi* (eel) is an expensive and popular delicacy in Japan. Even if you can't stand the creature when served in your home country, you owe it to yourself to try *unagi* at least once while in Japan. It's cooked over hot coals and brushed with a rich sauce of *shōyu* and sake. Full *unagi* dinners can be expensive, but many *unagi* restaurants offer *unagi bentō* (boxed lunches) and lunch sets for around ¥1500. Most *unagi* restaurants display plastic models of their sets in their front windows, and may have barrels of live eels to entice passers-by.

The sample menu, p207, will set you up for ordering *unagi*.

a variety of special sesame-seed and citrus-based sauces. Both of these dishes are prepared in a pot over a fire at your private table; don't fret about preparation – the waiter will usually help you get started and keep a close watch as you proceed.

Sukiyaki and *shabu-shabu* restaurants usually have traditional Japanese décor and sometimes a picture of a cow to help you identify them. Ordering is not difficult. Simply say *sukiyaki* or *shabu-shabu* and indicate how many people are dining. Expect to pay from ¥3000 to ¥10,000 per person.

## Tempura

Tempura consists of portions of fish, prawns and vegetables cooked in fluffy, nongreasy batter. When you sit down at a tempura restaurant, you will be given a small bowl of *ten-tsuyu* (a light brown sauce), and a plate of grated *daikon* (white radish) to mix into the sauce. Dip each piece of tempura into this sauce before eating it. Tempura is best when it's hot, so don't wait too long – use the sauce to cool each piece and dig in.

Expect to pay between ¥2000 and ¥10,000 for a full tempura meal. Finding these restaurants is tricky as they have no distinctive façade or décor. If you look through the window, you'll see customers around the counter watching the chefs as they work over large woks filled with oil.

To get you started, see p207 for a sample of tempura menu items.

## Rāmen

The Japanese imported this dish from China and put their own spin on it to make what is one of the world's most delicious fast foods. *Rāmen* dishes are big bowls of noodles in a meat broth, served with a variety of toppings, such as sliced pork, bean sprouts and leeks. In some restaurants you may be asked if you'd prefer *kotteri* (thick) or *assari* (thin) soup. Other than this, ordering is simple: just sidle up to the counter and say '*rāmen*', or ask for any of the other choices on offer. Expect to pay between ¥500 and ¥900 for a bowl. Since *rāmen* is derived from Chinese cuisine, some *rāmen* restaurants also serve *chāhan* or *yaki-meshi* (both dishes are fried rice), *gyōza* (dumplings) and *kara-age* (deep-fried chicken pieces).

*Rāmen* restaurants are easily distinguished by their long counters lined with customers

## Sushi & Sashimi

Like *yakitori*, sushi is considered an accompaniment for beer and sake. All proper sushi restaurants serve their fish over rice, in which case it's called sushi, or without rice, in which case it's called sashimi or *tsukuri* (or, politely, *o-tsukuri*).

Sushi is not difficult to order. If you sit at the counter of a sushi restaurant you can simply point at what you want, as most of the selections are visible in a refrigerated glass case between you and the sushi chef. You can also order à la carte from the menu. If that's too daunting, you can take care of your whole meal with just one or two words by asking for *mori-awase*, an assortment plate of *nigiri-zushi* (fish served on a small bed of rice). These usually come in three grades: *futsū nigiri* (regular *nigiri*), *jō nigiri* (special *nigiri*) and *toku-jō nigiri* (extra-special *nigiri*). The difference is in the type of fish used. Most *mori-awase* contain six or seven pieces of sushi.

Be warned that meals in a good sushi restaurant can cost upwards of ¥10,000, while an average establishment can run from ¥3000 to ¥5000 per person. One way to sample the joy of sushi on the cheap is to try an automatic sushi place, usually called *kaiten-zushi*, where the sushi is served on a conveyor belt that runs along a counter. You can usually fill yourself up in one of these places for ¥1000 to ¥2000 per person.

Note that most of the items on this sample sushi menu can be ordered as sashimi. Just add the words '*no o-tsukuri*' to get the sashimi version. So, for example, if you want some tuna sashimi, you would order '*maguro no o-tsukuri*'.

See p207 for a sample menu.

## Sukiyaki & Shabu-Shabu

Restaurants usually specialise in both these dishes. Popular in the West, *sukiyaki* is a favourite of most foreign visitors to Japan. *Sukiyaki* consists of thin slices of beef cooked in a broth of *shōyu* (soy sauce), sugar and sake, and is accompanied by a variety of vegetables and tofu. After cooking, all the ingredients are dipped in raw egg before being eaten. When made with high-quality beef, such as Kōbe beef, it is a sublime experience.

*Shabu-shabu* consists of thin slices of beef and vegetables cooked by swirling the ingredients in a light broth, then dipping them in



## DRINKS

### Alcoholic Drinks

Drinking plays a big role in Japanese society and there are few social occasions where beer or sake is not served. We list some common drinks in the food glossary, p208. If you don't drink alcohol, however, it's no big deal. Simply order *oolong cha* (oolong tea) in place of beer or sake. While some folks might put pressure on you to drink alcohol, you can diffuse this pressure by saying 'sake o nomimasen' (I don't drink alcohol).

*Izakaya* and *yakitori-ya* are cheap places for beer, sake and food. They offer a casual atmosphere resembling that of a pub. Otherwise, if that's not your thing, see p140 for some likely drinking holes.

### Nonalcoholic Drinks

*Kōhii* (coffee) served in a *kisaten* (coffee shop) tends to be expensive in Japan, costing between ¥350 and ¥500 a cup, with some places charging up to ¥1000. A cheap alternative is one of the newer coffee-restaurant chains such as Doutor or Pronto, or doughnut shops such as Mr Donut (which offers free refills). An even cheaper alternative is a can of coffee, hot or cold, from a vending machine. Although unpleasantly sweet, at ¥120 the price is hard to beat.

When ordering coffee at a coffee shop in Japan, you'll be asked whether you prefer it *hotto* (hot) or *aisu* (cold). Black tea also comes hot or cold, with *miruku* (milk) or *remon* (lemon). An excellent way to kick off your day of sightseeing in Kyoto is with a *mōningu setto* (morning set) of tea or coffee, toast and eggs. All up it will cost you around ¥400.

### SAKE

Sake (pronounced sah-kay, not sah-key) is Japan's traditional rice wine. While much of what is available overseas is pretty foul, the good stuff consumed on its home turf is bound to be a revelation.

There are several major types of sake, including *nigori* (cloudy), *nama* (unrefined) and regular, clear sake. Of these, clear sake is by far the most common. Clear sake is usually divided into three grades: *tokkyū* (premium), *ikkyū* (first grade) and *nikyū* (second grade). *Nikyū* is the routine choice. Sake can be further divided into *karakuchi* (dry) and *amakuchi* (sweet). As well as the national brewing giants, there are thousands of provincial brewers producing local brews called *jizake*.

Sake is served *atsukan* (warm) and *reishu* (cold), with warm sake, not surprisingly, being more popular in winter. When you order sake, it will usually be served in a small flask called *tokkuri*. These come in two sizes, so you should specify whether you want *ichigō* (small) or *nigō* (large). From these flasks you pour the sake into small ceramic cups called *o-choko* or *sakazuki*. Another way to sample sake is to drink it from a small wooden box called *masu*, with a bit of salt on the rim.

### JAPANESE TEA

Unlike black tea, which Westerners are familiar with, most Japanese tea is green and contains a lot of vitamin C and caffeine. The powdered form used in the tea ceremony is called *matcha* and is drunk after being whipped into a frothy consistency. The more common form, a leafy green tea, is simply called *o-cha*, and is drunk after being steeped in a pot. In addition to green tea, you'll probably drink a lot of a brownish tea called *bancha*, which restaurants serve for free. In summer, a cold beverage called *mugicha* (roasted barley tea) is served in private homes.

See p208 for some sample menu items.

### COOKING COURSES

If you enjoy the food you eat in Kyoto, why not deepen your appreciation of the cuisine by taking a cooking class at WAK Japan (Map pp54–5; ☎ 212-9993; www.wakjapan.com; Kamigyō-ku, Iseya-chō 412-506). WAK offers cooking courses and can create one to suit your special interests.

### PRACTICALITIES

#### How Much?

You may be surprised at how cheap it is to eat in Kyoto, especially if you're used to paying the inflated prices charged by Japanese restaurants abroad. And don't forget that there's no tipping in Japan and tea is free, so eating is actually very reasonable indeed.

You can eat simple meals in Japanese restaurants at lunch and dinner for less than ¥1000 per head (not including alcohol) if you stick to noodle/rice shops and *shokudō*. If you want something a bit nicer and in slightly more elegant surroundings, you can count

### PRICE GUIDE

The following is a guide to the pricing system in this chapter. Price indicators are per person per meal.

¥¥¥	over ¥5000
¥¥	¥1000-5000
¥	under ¥1000

on around ¥1500 to ¥2500 at lunch and ¥2500 to ¥4000 for dinner (not including alcohol). Of course, you can pay much more at some top-end places, especially for dinner.

Finally, keep in mind that even very fancy restaurants often serve reasonably priced lunch sets, allowing you to sample the good stuff without breaking the bank.

### Self-Catering

If you get tired of eating out all the time, you will have no problem buying food and preparing your own simple meals in Kyoto. First off, there are good shopping and food market streets all over town, including the famous Nishiki Market (p50). You'll also find Western-style supermarkets in most residential neighbourhoods and food floors in most of Kyoto's department stores, such as Takashimaya and Daimaru (see the boxed text, p109). You will be utterly amazed by the variety of both Western and Japanese food on offer at these places. If you are after speciality imported foods, try Meidi-ya (p109). Finally, Kyoto's ubiquitous convenience stores sell a surprising variety of meal-worthy items such as rice balls, fruit, milk, juice and – needless to say – the full range of salty/crunchy/chewy/sweet junk food.

### Getting a Reservation

You won't need a reservation at most of the restaurants listed in this chapter. And, unlike in some Western cities, you don't need connections to get into most places – as long as you're carrying yen, you're welcome (there are a few notable exceptions, none of which appear in this book). During busy seasons or at traditional upper-budget restaurants, however, a reservation is a good idea. If you don't speak Japanese, the easiest thing to do is simply ask someone at the place you're staying to call and make the reservation for you. When they call, it's often a good idea to have them order your meal (usually a course). This makes things easier for everyone involved – you don't have to worry about ordering and

the folks at the restaurant don't have to worry about communication.

## KYOTO STATION AREA

Unlike train stations elsewhere in the world, Kyoto Station is loaded with good places to eat. In the streets surrounding the station, you'll also find a few decent choices. The food courts in the station building itself (see the boxed text, p122) usually operate from 11am to 10pm daily, with some shops and cafés opening significantly earlier to serve commuters. Restaurants around the station keep normal business hours.

### IIMURA Map p46

Japanese ¥

☎ 351-8023; Shimogyō-ku, Shichijō-dōri,

Higashinotōin Nishi iru, Maoya-chō 216;

🕒 11.30am-2pm; lunch sets ¥650; 🚶 5min walk

from Kyoto Station

Try this classic little restaurant for its ever-changing set lunch – usually simple Japanese home-style cooking. Dishes might include a bit of fish or meat and the usual accompaniments of rice, miso soup and pickles. It's in a traditional Japanese house set back a bit from the street, alongside a new five-storey building (look for the black-and-white sign).

## DOWNTOWN KYOTO

The area between Oike-dōri and Shijō-dōri (north and south) and Kiyamachi-dōri and Karasuma-dōri (east and west) has the highest concentration of restaurants in the city. There's a wide range of both international and Japanese eateries in all price ranges. This is definitely the best place for a meal out in Kyoto. And if you're up for an after-dinner drink, there are plenty of bars and clubs here, too.

### IKUMATSU Map p50

Kaiseki ¥¥¥

☎ 231-1234; Nakagyō-ku, Kiyamachi-dōri, Oike agaru; 🕒 11.30am-3pm & 5.30-10pm; lunch from ¥5500, kaiseki dinner from ¥14,000; 🚶 2min walk from exit B2, Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

Ikumatsu is one of Kyoto's classical old *ryōri ryokan* (cuisine ryokan). In front of the ryokan is a more modern brick building in which the brilliant food is served to nonstaying guests. The ¥1030 *katsura kogoro* (lunch set) here is phenomenal value. Dinner sets start at ¥1900. The dining room décor is neither here nor there, but the food is top shelf.

## TRAIN STATION GOURMET

For a quick cuppa while waiting for a train at Kyoto Station, try Café du Monde (Map p46) on the 2nd floor overlooking the central atrium. For more substantial meals there are several food courts scattered about. The best of these can be found on the 11th floor on the west side of the building: the Cube (Map p46) food court and Isetan Department Store's Eat Paradise (Map p46) food court. In the Cube, we like Katsu Kura, a popular *tonkatsu* (deep-fried, breaded pork cutlet) specialist that usually has a tasty lunch special. In Eat Paradise, we highly recommend Tenichi for sublime tempura, and Wakuden for approachable *kaiseki* (Japanese *haute cuisine*) fare. To get to these food courts, take the west escalators from the main concourse all the way up to the 11th floor and look for the Cube on your left and Eat Paradise straight in front of you.

Other options in the station include Rāmen Koji (Map p46), a collection of seven *rāmen* (noodles in meat broth with meat and vegetables) restaurants on the 10th floor (underneath the Cube). Buy tickets for *rāmen* from the machines, which don't have English but have pictures on the buttons. In addition to *rāmen*, you can get green-tea ice cream and other Japanese desserts at Chasen and *tako yaki* (fried, battered octopus balls) at Miyako.

If you're departing by train or bus from Kyoto Station and want to pick up some nibbles for the ride, head downstairs to the B1 floor Porta underground shopping arcade. Here, you can purchase excellent sushi *bentō* (lunch boxes) at Kyōtaru and good bread and pastries at Shinshindō. Both are near the *kita* (north) exit of the Karasuma subway line.

Problem is, with only a few tables, the place is often full. Look for the brick façade.

### YOSHIKAWA Map p50 Tempura ¥¥¥

☎ 221-5544; Nakagyō-ku, Tominokōji-dōri, Oike kudarū; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-8pm, closed Sun; lunch ¥2000-6000, dinner ¥6000-12,000; ⌚ 5min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

For superb tempura, head for Yoshikawa. It offers fancy table seating, but it's much more interesting (and cheaper) to sit and eat around the small counter and observe the chefs at work. Look for the English sign reading 'Yoshikawa Inn'; the restaurant entrance is next door.

### PONTO-CHŌ UAN Map p50 Kaiseki ¥¥¥

☎ 221-2358/2269; Nakagyō-ku, Pontochō Sanjō sagarū; ☎ 5-10pm, closed Wed; dinner from ¥5000; ⌚ 8min walk from Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line

Ponto-chō Uan (formerly Uzuki) is an elegant *kaiseki* restaurant with a great platform for riverside dining in the summer. We recommend that you have a Japanese speaker call to reserve and choose your meal. Look for the rabbit on the sign.

### MISHIMA-TEI Map p50 Sukiyaki ¥¥¥

☎ 221-0003; Nakagyō-ku, Teramachi-dōri Sanjō kudarū, Sakurano-chō 405; ☎ 11.30am-10pm, closed Wed; sukiyaki sets from ¥4400; ⌚ 5min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line

This is an inexpensive place to sample sukiyaki. The quality of the meat here is very

high – hardly surprising when you consider there is a butcher right downstairs. There is an English menu and a discount for foreign travellers! It's in the intersection of the Sanjō and Teramachi covered arcades.

### TŌSUIRŌ Map p50 Tofu ¥¥

☎ 251-1600; Nakagyō-ku, Kiyamachi-dōri, Sanjō agarū, Kamiōsaka-chō 517-3; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5-9.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-8.30pm Sun, closed irregularly; lunch/dinner ¥2000/5000; ⌚ 5min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

We really like this tofu specialist. It's got great traditional Japanese décor and in summer you can sit on the *yuka* (dining platform) outside with a view of the Kamo-gawa. You will most probably be amazed by the incredible variety of dishes that can be created with tofu. At lunch, the *machiya-zen* (tofu set; ¥2100) is highly recommended. At dinner, we suggest the Higashiyama tofu set (¥3675). Tōsuirō is at the end of an alley on the north (left) side.

### UOSUE Map p50 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 351-1437; Shimogyō-ku, Ayakōji-dōri, Higashinotōin Higashi iru, Shinmei-chō 724; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-10pm, closed Sun; lunch/bentō ¥1050, dinner from ¥3990; ⌚ 1min walk from Karasuma Station, Hankyū line

Uosue is one of the best value Japanese places in town. It's a traditional Kyoto-style restaurant with a clean interior and friendly proprietors. For lunch, try the wonderful *nijū bentō* for ¥1000. At dinner, the *omakase ryōri kōsu* is a great way to sample *kaiseki*

*ryōri* without breaking the bank: it costs just ¥3800. It's next to a tiny shrine – keep an eye out for the sake barrels out the front.

### MISOKA-AN KAWAMICHI-YA Soba ¥¥

Map p50 ☎ 221-2525; Nakagyō-ku, Fuyachō, Sanjō agarū; ☎ 11am-8pm, closed Thu; dishes ¥700-3800; ⌚ 3min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

For a taste of some of Kyoto's best *soba* in traditional surroundings, head to this place, where noodles have been made by hand for 300 years. Try a simple bowl of *nishin* (fish-topped) *soba*, or the more elaborate *nabe* dishes (cooked in a special cast-iron pot). There is a small English sign.

### UONTANA Map p50 Izakaya ¥¥

☎ 221-2579; Nakagyō-ku, Rokkaku-dōri, Shinkyōgoku-dōri, Higashi iru; ☎ noon-3pm & 5-10pm, closed Wed; dinner from ¥3000; ⌚ 7min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line

This upscale *izakaya* is a good spot to try a range of sake and elegantly presented Japanese fare (sashimi, fried dishes, salads). The design is sleek, modern and more Tokyo than Kyoto. There is an English menu and a tiny lantern out the front.

### TOMIZUSHI Map p50 Sushi ¥¥

☎ 231-3628; Nakagyō-ku, Shinkyōgoku-dōri, Shijō agarū, Higashi iru; ☎ 5pm-midnight, closed Thu; dinner ¥3000; ⌚ 5min walk from Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line

For good sushi in lively surroundings, try Tomizushi, where you can rub elbows with your neighbours at a long marble counter and watch as some of the fastest sushi chefs in the land do their thing. Go early or be prepared to wait in a queue. It's near the Shijō-Kawaramachi crossing; look for the lantern and the black-and-white signs.

### ZU ZU Map p50 Izakaya ¥¥

☎ 231-0736; Nakagyō-ku, Pontochō, Takoyakushi agarū, Nishi gawa; ☎ 6pm-2am; dinner from ¥3000; ⌚ 5min walk from Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line

This Pontochō *izakaya* is a fun place to eat. The best bet when ordering is to ask the waiter for a recommendation. The fare is sort of nouveau-Japanese, with menu items such as shrimp with tofu and chicken with plum sauce. Look for the white stucco exterior and black bars on the windows.

### GANKO ZUSHI Map p50 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 255-1128; Nakagyō-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Kawaramachi Higashi iru; ☎ 11.30am-10.30pm; lunch/dinner ¥1000/3000; ⌚ 3min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line

This giant four-storey dining hall is part of Kansai's biggest sushi chain. The ground floor is the sushi area (you can order non-sushi dishes here as well); it has a long sushi counter and plenty of tables. Despite the fact that it's a giant plebeian dining hall, it's actually one of the most convenient spots in Downtown Kyoto for travellers to dine in, and the extensive English/picture menu makes ordering a breeze. The set meals are good value. Downstairs is an *izakaya* and upstairs has rooms for parties. This place may have the most plastic-looking food models out of any restaurant window in Kyoto. It's near the Sanjō-Ōhashi bridge.

### MUKADE-YA Map p50 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 256-7039; Nakagyō-ku, Shinmachi-dōri-Nishikikōji; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-9pm, closed Wed; meals from ¥3000; ⌚ 5min walk from Shijō Station, Karasuma subway line

Mukade-ya is an atmospheric restaurant located in an exquisite *machiya* west of Karasuma-dōri. For lunch try the special *bentō*: two rounds (five small dishes each) of delectable *obanzai* (Kyoto-style home cooking) fare. *Kaiseki* courses start at ¥5000.

### MERRY ISLAND CAFÉ International ¥¥

Map p50 ☎ 213-0214; Nakagyō-ku, Kiyamachi-dōri, Oike kudarū; ☎ 11.30am-11pm, closed Mon; lunch/dinner ¥800/3000; ⌚ 2min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

This popular restaurant strives to create the atmosphere of a tropical resort. The menu is *mukokuseki* (without nationality) and most of what is on offer is pretty tasty. It does a good risotto and occasionally offers a nice piece of Japanese steak. In warm weather the front doors are opened and the place takes on the air of a sidewalk café (it doesn't hurt that it's located on one of the prettiest streets in Kyoto). There are English menus and an English sign.

### SHIRUKŌ Map p50 Obanzai ¥¥

☎ 221-3250; Shimogyō-ku, Nishikiyamachi, Shijō agarū; ☎ 11.30am-9pm, closed Wed; lunch & dinner from ¥2600; ⌚ 2min walk from Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line

For a light meal, Shirukō has been serving simple Kyoto *obanzai-ryōri* since 1932. The restaurant features more than 10 varieties of miso soup, and the *rikyū bentō* (mixed lunch box; ¥2600) is a bona fide work of art. Shirukō is down a somewhat seedy pedestrian alley near Shijō-Kawaramachi crossing; look for the bamboo out the front.

### FUJINO-YA Map p50 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 221-2446; Nakagyō-ku, Pontochō-dōri, Shijō agaru; ☎ 5-8pm, closed Wed; tempura sets ¥2500; ☎ 3min walk from Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line

This is one of the easiest places for non-Japanese to enter on Pontochō, a street where many of the other restaurants turn down even unfamiliar Japanese diners. Here you can feast on tempura, *okonomiyaki*, *yaki-soba* and *kushikatsu* in tatami rooms overlooking the Kamo-gawa.

### LE BOUCHON Map p50 French ¥¥

☎ 211-5220; Nakagyō-ku, Teramachi-dōri-Nijō; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm, 5.30-9.30pm, closed Thu; dinner sets ¥2500; ☎ 3min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

This reliable French place serves tasty lunch and dinner sets and has a pleasant, casual atmosphere. The kitchen does great work with fish, salads and desserts, and the *pommes frites* (French fries) are excellent. The owner speaks English, French and Japanese and will make you feel right at home. The set dinner (appetiser, main and dessert) is great value. Lunch sets cost less than ¥1000. It's near the corner; look for the blackboard displaying the day's specials.

### GANKO NIJŌ-EN Map p50 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 223-3456; Nakagyō-ku, Kiyamachi-dōri, Nijō kudaru; ☎ 11.30am-10pm; lunch/dinner from ¥1500/2500; ☎ 3min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

This is an upscale branch of the Ganko *kushi* chain that serves sushi and simple *zaiseki* sets. There's a picture menu and you can stroll in the stunning garden before or after your meal. It's near the Nijō-Kiyamachi crossing; you can't miss the grand entrance or the food models in the glass window.

### SHIZENHA RESTAURANT OBANZAI

Map p50 Obanzai ¥¥

☎ 223-6623; Nakagyō-ku, Koromonotana-dōri-Oike; ☎ 11am-9pm, closed dinner Wed; lunch/dinner

¥840/2100; ☎ 5min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line

A little out of the way, but nevertheless good value, this place serves a decent buffet-style lunch and dinner of mostly organic Japanese vegetarian food. It's northwest of the Karasuma-Oike crossing, set back a bit from the street.

### VEGGIE TABLE Map p50 Hot Salad ¥¥

☎ 241-0359; Nakagyō-ku, Sanjō, Kawaramachi Higashi iru, Sanjō Kiyamachi Bldg 1st & 2nd fl; ☎ 11.30am-3.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-4.30pm & 5-10pm Sat & Sun, closed irregularly; lunch/dinner ¥1000/2000; ☎ 5min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line

Right near one of the busiest corners in the Kiyamachi-Sanjō entertainment-dining district, this clean, well-lit new restaurant specialises in 'hot salad' sets (steamed vegetables and a variety of side dishes, including brown rice). It's a healthy addition to a neighbourhood that has, up until now, focused more on *rāmen* and booze. It has an English sign on the street; otherwise, look for the glass front.

### CAPRICCIOSA Map p50 Italian ¥¥

☎ 221-7496; Nakagyō-ku, Kawaramachi-dōri-Sanjō kudaru; ☎ 11.30am-11pm; dinner from ¥1500; ☎ 5min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line

For heaped portions of pasta at rock-bottom prices you won't do much better than this longtime student favourite. Pasta dishes start at around ¥800 and you can choose from pizzas, salads, and various meat and fish dishes. It will definitely not be the best Italian you've ever had, but you'll probably leave full and happy. It's near the Sanjō-Kawaramachi crossing; look for the red-brick steps and the green awning. There's an English menu and an English sign.

### OMEN NIPPON Map p50 Japanese/Udon ¥¥

☎ 253-0377; Nakagyō-ku, Shijō-dōri, Pontochō Nishi iru; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 5-10pm, closed Thu; Omen ¥1050; ☎ 2min walk from exit 1, Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line

This is one of two Downtown branches of the famous Ginkaku-ji noodle restaurant. It serves a variety of healthy set meals, including a good ¥1900 lunch set that includes noodles and a few sides. It's a small, calm place that's a nice oasis amid the

Downtown mayhem, good for a light lunch while out shopping, and it has an English menu to boot. Look for the word 'Nippon' on the sign.

### AZAMI Map p50 Japanese/Chicken ¥¥

☎ 252-1860; Nakagyō-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Takakura agaru, Museum of Kyoto 1st fl; ☎ 11am-10pm, closed Mon; meals from ¥1000; ☎ 3min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line  
Located on the ground floor of the Museum of Kyoto, on the northeast side of the building, this chicken specialist serves a wide variety of excellent dishes in a fairly traditional Japanese atmosphere. Choices range from *yakitori* to *tsukune* (chicken meatballs) to a healthy chicken salad. If you don't mind sitting on tatami, downstairs rooms are highly recommended.

### ANJI Map p50 Izakaya ¥¥

☎ 231-5375; Nakagyō-ku, Rokkaku-dōri, Karasuma Higashi iru, Hoshinoko Rokkaku Bldg. 2nd fl; ☎ 5pm-2am, closed Sun; meals ¥1000; ☎ 5min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line

This smoky *izakaya*-style fish specialist is a great place to sample a wide variety of sashimi, cooked fish and standard *izakaya* dishes. You can sit on the tatami mats in the *zashiki* (communal room), but you'll have to have a high tolerance for cigarette smoke. If you don't smoke, and don't want to be smoked, we recommend the counter. There is no English menu, so you'll have to bring a Japanese-speaking friend or point at what your neighbours are eating. Anji is up a flight of steps festooned with signs (in Japanese) advertising the menu; you'll know the place when you see it.

### BIOTEI Map p50 Japanese Vegetarian ¥¥

☎ 255-0086; Nakagyō-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Higashinotōin Nishi Minami kado 2F; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5-8.30pm, closed dinner Sun, Mon & Thu, lunch Sat & public holidays; lunch/dinner ¥840/1050; ☎ 5min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line

Located diagonally across from the Nakagyō post office, this is a favourite of Kyoto vegetarians and has an English menu. It serves daily sets of Japanese vegetarian food (the occasional bit of meat is offered as an option, but you'll be asked your preference). The seating is rather cramped but the food is very good and

carefully made from quality ingredients. It's up the metal spiral steps.

### SOMUSHI KOCHAYA

Map p50 Korean Teahouse ¥¥

☎ 253-1456; Nakagyō-ku, Karasuma, Sanjō Nishi iru; ☎ 10am-9pm, closed Wed; tea from ¥500, meals from ¥1000; ☎ 3min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line  
This is the only Korean teahouse we've ever seen in Japan. It's a good place to go when you need a change from the creeping monoculture of coffee chain stores. It's a dark, woody and atmospheric spot with a variety of herbal teas (the menu details what they're good for). The teahouse also serves a few light meals, including some unusual Korean favourites (just don't expect Korean barbecue).

### TAGOTO HONTEN Map p50 Soba ¥

☎ 221-3030; Nakagyō-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Teramachi Higashi iru; ☎ 11am-9pm; noodles from ¥997; ☎ 10min walk from Shijō Station, Karasuma subway line

This casual restaurant in the Sanjō covered arcade serves a variety of *soba* and *udon* dishes. It can get crowded at lunchtime and the service can be rather brusque, but the noodles are very good and the English/picture menu helps with ordering. The tempura *teishoku* makes a great lunch.

### PARK CAFÉ Map p50 Café ¥¥

☎ 211-8954; Nakagyō-ku, Gokomachi-dōri, Aneyakōji kado; ☎ noon-midnight; lunch sets ¥940; ☎ 3min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line

This cool little café always reminds us of a Melbourne coffee shop. It's on the edge of the Downtown Kyoto shopping district and is a convenient place to take a break. The comfy seats invite a nice long linger over a cuppa and the owner has an interesting music collection.

### LUGOL Map p50 Café ¥¥

☎ 213-2888; Nakagyō-ku, Shinmachi-dōri, Oike agaru, Nakano-chō 50-1; ☎ 11.30am-11pm; lunch sets ¥920; ☎ 5min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line

For a quick cuppa or a snack in groovy surroundings, this cosy coffee shop on the west side of Downtown Kyoto is a very nice choice. We go there for decorating ideas as much as for the drinks.



**KYŌ-HAYASHIYA** Map p50

Café ¥

☎ 231-3198; Nakagyō-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Kawaramachi Higashi iru, Takase Bldg 6F; ☎ 11.30am-9.30pm, closed irregularly; matcha sweets ¥900; ☎ 3min walk from exit 6, Sanjō Station, Keihan line  
If you need a change from large American coffee chains and want to try some good Japanese green tea – and enjoy a nice view over the mountains while you're at it – this is the place for it. Kyō-hayashiya also has a handy picture menu.

**KANE-YO** Map p50

Unagi ¥

☎ 221-0669; Nakagyō-ku, Shinkyōgoku, Rokkaku Higashi iru; ☎ 11.30am-9pm; unagi over rice ¥890; ☎ 10min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line  
This is a good place to try *unagi*, that most sublime of Japanese dishes. You can choose to either sit downstairs with a nice view of the waterfall, or upstairs on the tatami. The *kane-yo donburi* (eel over rice; ¥890) set is excellent value. Look for the barrels of live eels outside and the wooden façade.

**KŌSENDŌ-SUMI** Map p50

Japanese ¥

☎ 241-7377; Nakagyō-ku, Aneyakōji-dōri, Sakaimachi Higashi iru; ☎ 11am-4pm, closed Sun & public holidays; lunch from ¥870; ☎ 5min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line  
For a pleasant lunch downtown, try this unpretentious little restaurant located in an old Japanese house. The daily lunch special, which is usually simple and healthy Japanese fare, is always displayed out the front for your inspection. It's near the Museum of Kyoto, next to a small parking lot.

**KERALA** Map p50

Indian ¥

☎ 251-0141; Nakagyō-ku, Kawaramachi-dōri, Sanjō agaru Nishi gawa; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5-9pm; lunch from ¥850; ☎ 3min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line  
This narrow restaurant upstairs on Kawaramachi-dōri is Kyoto's best Indian restaurant. The ¥850 lunch set menu is an excellent deal, as is the vegetarian lunch, and the English menu is a bonus. Dinners run closer to ¥2500 per head and are of very high quality. Finish off the meal with the incredibly rich and creamy coconut ice cream. Kerala is located on the 2nd floor; look for the display of food down on street level.

**KATSU KURA** Map p50

Tonkatsu ¥

☎ 212-3581; Nakagyō-ku, Teramachi-dōri, Sanjō Higashi iru; ☎ 11am-9.30pm; tonkatsu from ¥819; ☎ 10min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line  
This restaurant in the Sanjō covered arcade is a good place to sample *tonkatsu* (deep-fried breaded pork cutlets). Most of the cutlets come with a set that includes rice, miso soup and cabbage (extra helpings of these are free). It's not the best in Kyoto but it's relatively cheap and casual, and it has an English menu.

**CAFÉ BIBLIOTEC HELLO!** Map p50

Café ¥

☎ 231-8625; Nakagyō-ku, Nijō-dōri-Yanaginobanba higashi iru; ☎ noon-11pm, closed irregularly; dishes from ¥700; ☎ 10min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line  
As the name suggests, books line the walls of this cool café located in a converted *machiya*. You can get the usual range of coffee and tea drinks here, as well as light café lunches. It's popular with young ladies who work nearby and it's a great place to relax with a book or magazine. Look for the plants out the front.

**YAK & YETI** Map p50

Nepalese ¥

☎ 213-7919; Nakagyō-ku, Gokomachi-dōri, Nishikikōji kudaru; ☎ 11.30am-4.30pm & 5-9.30pm, closed Mon; curry lunch sets from ¥600; ☎ 5min walk from Shijō Station, Karasuma subway line  
This tiny joint serves more than just the *dal bhaat* (rice and lentil curry) that most people associate with Nepalese cuisine. In fact, the fare (good curries and tasty nan bread) is probably closer to Indian. There is counter seating, but we like to sit on the comfortable cushions here. English menus are available. The staff is pretty chuffed about being listed in our guides and has posted a picture of an old edition out the front – should be no trouble finding it.

**HATI HATI** Map p50

Indonesian ¥

☎ 212-2228; Nishikiyamachi-dōri-Takoyakushi; ☎ 6pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; dishes from ¥600; ☎ 5min walk from Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line  
Hati Hati offers some of the best Indonesian food in Kyoto, including all the standard favourites, such as *nasi goreng* (fried rice) and *mee goreng* (fried noodles). It's on the basement floor of the Kankō building; look for the green stairwell. It also doubles

as a bar-club – stop by and see what's up if you're in the area.

**SHIN-SHIN-TEI** Map p50

Rāmen ¥

☎ 221-6202; Nakagyō-ku, Nijō-dōri-Fuyachō; ☎ 10.30am-4pm, closed Sun, Mon & public holidays; rāmen from ¥600; ☎ 4min walk from Kyoto-Shiyakusho-mae Station, Tōzai subway line  
This place is famous for its *shiro* (white) miso *rāmen*, which has a distinctive thick soup and good chewy noodles. The restaurant scores minimal points for ambience, which is typical for *rāmen* joints. The claim to fame here is that Keanu Reeves once ate here. Look for the yellow-and-black sign.

**INODA COFFEE** Map p50

Café ¥

☎ 221-0507; Nakagyō-ku, Sakaimachi-dōri, Sanjō kudaru; ☎ 7am-8pm; coffee from ¥500; ☎ 5min walk from Karasuma-Oike Station, Karasuma subway line  
This chain is a Kyoto institution and has branches throughout the city. Though slightly overrated for the price, the old-Japan atmosphere at this, Inoda's main shop, is worth a try, especially if you want something Japanese rather than international.

**CAFÉ INDEPENDANTS** Map p50

Café ¥

☎ 255-4312; Nakagyō-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Gokomachi; ☎ 11.45am-midnight; coffee from ¥300, salads & sandwiches from ¥400; ☎ 10min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line  
Located beneath a gallery, this cool subterranean café offers a range of light meals and café drinks in a bohemian atmosphere (after you eat, you can check out the gallery space upstairs). A lot of the food offerings are laid out on display for you to choose from. The emphasis is on healthy sandwiches and salads. Take the stairs on your left before the gallery.

**DOUTOR COFFEE** Map p50

Café ¥

☎ 213-4041; Shimogyō-ku, Shijō-dōri-Fuyachō nishi iru; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun & public holidays; coffee ¥180; ☎ 10min walk from Kawaramachi Station, Hankyū line  
A lot of Western travellers have discovered the joys of Doutor Coffee, which has branches all over Kyoto. The coffee itself is dirt cheap but the real draw here are the surprisingly tasty sandwiches – just the thing when you need a break from the usual insipid things they call sandwiches

in Japan. The picture menu makes ordering easy.

**MUSASHI SUSHI** Map p50

Sushi ¥

☎ 222-0634; Nakagyō-ku, Kawaramachi-dōri, Sanjō agaru; ☎ 11am-10pm; dishes ¥100; ☎ 5min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line  
If you've never tried *kaiten-zushi*, don't miss this place – all the dishes are a mere ¥130. It's not the best sushi in the world, but it's a heckuva lot better than most 'sushi trains' outside Japan. Needless to say, it's easy to eat here: you just grab what you want off the conveyor belt. If you can't find what you want on the belt, there's also an English menu. Musashi is just outside the entrance to the Sanjō covered arcade; look for the miniature sushi conveyor belt in the window.

**CENTRAL KYOTO**

Central Kyoto has a wide variety of restaurants, both Japanese and international, in all budget ranges. Many of the lunch places serve cheap specials for the folks who work nearby. Several of the restaurants in this section are worth making a special trip for and most are close to public transport.

**LINDEN BAUM** Map pp54-5

European ¥¥

☎ 213-3979; Kamigyō-ku, Teramachi-dōri, Imadegawa kudaru, Higashi gawa, Ōgi-chō 273-2; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-10.30pm, closed Mon & 2nd Tue of each month; lunch sets from ¥1000, dinner ¥4200; ☎ 8min walk from Imadegawa Station, Karasuma subway line  
This pleasant hideaway near the Kyoto Imperial Palace serves what it describes as 'European cooking', which often involves pasta and fish. It's usually quiet and relaxing, and has lovely long wooden tables. The set lunch is generally a very good deal. Linden Baum is down a narrow alley; look for the English sign.

**MANZARA HONTEN**

Map pp54-5

Modern Japanese ¥¥

☎ 253-1558; Nakagyō-ku, Kawaramachi-dōri, Ebisugawa agaru; ☎ 5pm-midnight; dinner sets from ¥4000; ☎ 10min walk from Marutamachi Station, Karasuma subway line  
Located in a converted *machiya* (traditional Japanese town house), Manzara represents a pleasing fusion of traditional and modern Japanese culture. The fare here is creative

modern Japanese and the surroundings are decidedly stylish. The *omakase* (chef's recommendation) course is good value, with eight dishes for ¥4000, and à la carte dishes are available from ¥500. Last orders are at 11.30pm.

### DEN SHICHI Map pp54-5 Sushi ¥¥

☎ 323-0700; Ukyō-ku, Shijō-dōri-Sai; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5-10.30pm, closed Mon; lunch/dinner from ¥480/3000; 🕒 3min walk from Saiin Station, Hankyū line

This is our favourite sushi restaurant in Kyoto. It's a classic – long counter, bel-lowing sushi chefs and great fresh fish. The lunch sets are unbelievable value and the glass sushi cases make ordering a little easier than at some other places. It's almost always hopping and doesn't take reservations, so you may have to give your name and wait – but it will definitely be worth it. Look for the black-and-white sign about 100m west of Saiin Station on Shijō-dōri.

### SHUHARI Map pp54-5 French ¥¥

☎ 222-6815; Kamigyō-ku, Kawaramachi-dōri, Marutamachi agaru; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri-Sun; lunch/dinner ¥850/2500; 🕒 10min walk from Marutamachi Station, Karasuma subway line

Shuhari is a great example of Kyoto's newest dining trend – fine restaurants in renovated *machiya*. In this case, the food is casual French, with an emphasis on light fish dishes and healthy salads. Look for the red stove pipe with the name of the restaurant written on it out the front.

### PRINZ Map pp54-5 Café ¥

☎ 712-3900; Sakyō-ku, Higashi-kuramaguchi-dōri-Shirakawa; ☎ 8am-2am; lunch sets from ¥1200; 🕒 2min walk from Chayama Station, Eizan line Behind the blank white façade of Prinz, you'll find a café-restaurant, gallery, bookshop, garden and library – a chic island of coolness in an otherwise bland residential neighbourhood. You can sit at the counter and request music from the CDs that line the walls. The lunch set usually includes a light assortment of Western and Japanese dishes, generally on the healthy side of things. Coffee starts at ¥300. All in all, this is a very interesting stop while you're in the northeast part of town. Note that last orders are at 11.30pm.

# top picks

## CAFÉS

Kyoto is known the world over for its elegant traditional restaurants. What few travellers realise, however, is that the city is also home to a great number of groovy cafés, which are easy to enter, fun to hang out in and surprisingly inexpensive. Some of these cafés have art galleries or small libraries on the premises; others hold art events and live music shows; and most serve light meals throughout the day and drinks in the evening. So, if you need a cuppa and a break from temple-hopping, pop into one of the cafés listed here.

- **Café Bibliotec HELLO!** (p126) A literary café a short walk from the centre of town.
- **Café Independants** (p127) A subterranean slice of bohemian life in the centre of town.
- **Prinz** (below) An intriguing shop-library-gallery-restaurant way up north in Kyoto.
- **Lugol** (p125) A mod retreat in Downtown Kyoto.
- **Bon Bon Café** (opposite) An open-air café with riverside seating, near Demachiyana Station.
- **Café Carinho** (p134) A casual Western-style lunch spot in the Ginkaku-ji area.

### DIDI Map pp54-5 Indian ¥

☎ 791-8226; Sakyō-ku, Tanaka-ōkubo-chō 22; ☎ 11am-9.30pm, closed Wed; lunch/dinner from ¥750/900; 🕒 1min walk from Mototanaka Station, Eizan line

A cosy little spot in the north of town past Hyakumamben and Kyoto University, this friendly smoke-free restaurant serves passable Indian lunch and dinner sets. There are plenty of vegetarian choices on the menu, which is available in English. Didi is easy to spot from the street.

### HIRAGANA-KAN Map pp54-5 Shokudō ¥

☎ 701-4164; Sakyō-ku, Tanakahinokuchi-chō 44; ☎ 11.30am-4pm & 6-10pm, closed Tue; lunch & dinner from ¥800; 🕒 8min walk from Mototanaka Station, Eizan line

This place, popular with Kyoto University students, dishes up creative variations on chicken, fish and meat. Most mains come with rice, salad and miso soup. The menu is in Japanese only, but if you're at a loss for what to order try the tasty 'roll chicken *katsu*', a delectable and filling creation of chicken and vegetables. Look for the words 'Casual Restaurant' on the white awning.

### HONYARADŌ Map pp54-5 Japanese ¥

☎ 222-1574; Kamigyō-ku, Imadegawa, Teramachi Nishi iru; ☎ 10am-10pm; lunch ¥700; 🕒 1min walk from Kawaramachi Imadegawa bus stop, bus 205 from Kyoto Station

This woody place overlooking the Kyoto Imperial Palace Park is an institution. It was something of a gathering spot for Kyoto's countercultural elite during the hippy days. It has the lived-in feeling of an eccentric friend's house, with stacks of books and magazines and interesting decorations. The lunch deal (a daily stew set) is good value. Surprisingly, considering the ambience, there aren't many veggie options. It's a good place to relax over coffee.

### COCO HANA Map pp54-5 Korean ¥

☎ 525-5587; Higashiyama-ku, Honmachi 13-243-1; ☎ 11am-11pm Thu-Mon, to 5.30pm Tue, closed Wed; lunch from ¥680; 🕒 2min walk from Tōfukuji Station, Keihan line

This place is one of a kind: a Korean café in a converted old Japanese house. Dishes here include *bibimbap* (a Korean rice dish) and *kimchi* (Korean pickles). A full range of coffee and tea is also available. It's a woody, rustic place with both table and tatami seating. There is no English menu but the friendly young staff will help with ordering. This makes a great stop while exploring southeastern Kyoto.

### TSURUHASHI Map pp54-5 Rāmen ¥

☎ 722-3434; Sakyō-ku, Ichijōji nishi Suginomiyachō; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-11pm, closed Thu; rāmen from ¥600; 🕒 5min walk from Ichijōji Station, Eizan line

Kyoto *rāmen* fans make the trek to this unprepossessing little joint for its unique duck-flavoured soup, a serious rarity in Japan. For lunch, big eaters will enjoy the B set, which includes duck-soup *rāmen*, rice and *karaage* (pieces of deep-fried chicken). Look for the yellow awning and the red-and-yellow sign.

### KAZARIYA Map pp54-5 Sweets ¥

☎ 491-9402; Kita-ku, Murasakino Imamiya-chō; ☎ 10am-5pm, closed Wed; sweets ¥500; 🕒 1min walk from Imamiya-jinja bus stop, bus 46 from Kyoto Station

For more than 300 years, Kazariya has been specialising in *aburi-mochi* (grilled rice cakes coated with soya-bean flour) and served with *miso-dare* (sweet-bean paste). It's a nice place to go for some tea

and a sweet after exploring the grounds of Daitoku-ji (p53).

### BON BON CAFÉ Map pp54-5 Café ¥

☎ 213-8686; Sakyō-ku, Kawaramachi, Imadegawa, Higashi iru-Kita gawa; ☎ 10am-midnight; coffee/sandwiches from ¥300/500; 🕒 3min walk from Demachiyana Station, Keihan line

If you find yourself in need of a light meal or drink while you're in the Demachiyana area, this casual open-air café is an excellent choice. There is a variety of cakes and light meals on offer. While there is no English menu, much of the ordering can be done by pointing, and the young staff can help you figure out what's not on display. It's on the west bank of the Kamo-gawa and outdoor seats here are very pleasant on warm evenings.

## SOUTHERN HIGASHIYAMA

Southeast Kyoto is second only to Downtown in terms of variety and number of restaurants. You'll find the largest concentration of eateries in Gion, with others scattered around the main sightseeing spots at the base of the Higashiyama Mountains. This area contains many of Kyoto's fanciest and most elite restaurants but there are, of course, more humble places to enjoy as well.

### MINOKŌ Map p62 Kaiseiki ¥¥¥

☎ 561-0328; Higashiyama-ku, Gion, Shimokawara; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5-8pm; lunch ¥4500-10,000, dinner from ¥13,000; 🕒 12min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line

This classic Gion restaurant serves a lunch *ben-tō* for ¥4500 and *kaiseiki* dinners starting at ¥13,000. The décor is classic old Kyoto, the service is excellent and the food is of high quality. There is no English sign; it's across from a parking lot – look for the metal lantern out the front.

### AUNBO Map p62 Japanese ¥¥¥

☎ 525-2900; Higashiyama-ku, Yasaka Torii mae kudaru, Shimokawara-machi; ☎ noon-2pm, 5.30-10pm, closed Wed; lunch ¥2500, dinner ¥6000-10,000; 🕒 10min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line

Aunbo serves elegant, creative Japanese cooking in traditional Gion surroundings. The last time we were here we started with



## VEGETARIAN KYOTO

If you eat fish, you should have almost no trouble dining in Kyoto: almost all *shokudō* (Japanese-style cafeteria—cheap restaurant), *izakaya* (Japanese pub-eatery) and other common restaurants offer a set meal with fish as the main dish. If you don't eat fish or fish products, you will have to get your protein from tofu and other bean products. Note that most *miso-shiru* (miso soup) is made with *dashi* (stock) that contains fish.

For ways in which to express your dietary preferences to restaurant staff, see p206.

The following is a list of specifically vegetarian or vegan restaurants as well as restaurants that have plenty of vegetarian dishes on the menu:

**Machapuchare** (opposite) The *obanzai* (Kyoto-style home cooking) set here is the best veggie meal in Kyoto.

**Sunny Place** (p134) Cheap and friendly organic spot near Kyoto University.

**Café Peace** (p135) Another great organic spot near Kyoto University.

**Buttercups** (p135) Not strictly veggie, but there are several good choices here.

**Kailash** (p134) This is a true organic spot in a nice traditional town house.

**Shizenha Restaurant Obanzai** (p124) For all-you-can-eat organic veggie, this is the spot.

**Biotei** (p125) High-quality veggie right downtown.

**Veggie Table** (p124) A new 'hot salad' place downtown.

**Kerala** (p126) The best Indian restaurant in Kyoto – try the veggie lunch set.

**Didi** (p128) Plenty of good veggie choices at this Indian eatery.

sublime sashimi, moved on to fried *yuba* pockets and went from there. We recommend asking for the set and leaving the difficult decisions to the master. Aunbo takes reservations in the evening. There is an English menu but no English sign; look for the traditional Japanese façade.

### WABIYA KOREKIDŌ Map p62 Yakitori ¥¥

☎ 532-3355; Higashiyama-ku, Shijō Hanami-kōji kudarū, Gion-machi, Minami gawa; 🕒 11.30am-2pm & 5-11pm, closed Tue; lunch/dinner ¥1050/6000;

🕒 10min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line This slick restaurant on Gion's atmospheric Hanami-kōji serves what, for lack of a better term, we will call 'haute yakitori'. It's the nicest *yakitori* we've had, and the setting is a lot more elegant than your typical *yakitori* joint. At dinner, the *shunsa iwabiya kōsu* (full chicken course; ¥3675) is excellent. At lunch, choose from one of the meals on the picture menu outside. The name of the place is written in English in tiny letters on the black-and-white sign.

### ŌZAWA Map p62 Tempura ¥¥

☎ 561-2052; Higashiyama-ku, Gion, Shirakawa Nawate Higashi iru 5th; 🕒 11.30am-10pm, closed Thu; lunch/dinner ¥2500/3800; 🕒 5min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line

Located on one of the most beautiful streets in Gion – Shirakawa-minami-dōri (also

known as Shimbashi) – this charming little restaurant offers excellent tempura in refined Japanese surroundings. Unless you choose a private tatami room, you'll sit at the counter and watch as the chef prepares each piece of tempura individually right before your eyes. Considering the location and the quality of the food, this place is great value. Ōzawa also has an English menu. The restaurant is across a bridge; look for the sign on the street.

### GION MORIKŌ Map p62 Cantonese ¥¥

☎ 531-8000; Higashiyama-ku, Shirakawa-suji Chion-in-bashi agaru Nishi gawa 556; 🕒 11.30am-2pm & 5-9.30pm, closed Wed; lunch/dinner sets from ¥800/3000; 🕒 3min walk from Higashiyama Station, Tōzai subway line

All the usual Cantonese favourites in a fairly casual Japanese setting are the draw at this friendly little place. À la carte dishes start from ¥900. Gion Morikō is located along the picturesque Shira-kawa canal on the northern edge of Gion. The master speaks some English and can help with ordering.

### ICHI-BAN Map p62 Yakitori ¥¥

☎ 751-1459; Higashiyama-ku, Sanjō Ōhashi Higashi iru; 🕒 5.30pm-midnight, closed Sun & public holidays; dinner from ¥3000; 🕒 3min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line

This popular *yakitori* joint has an English menu and a friendly owner to help with

ordering. Best of all, it has that classic old *yakitori-ya* ambience – smoking charcoal grills, old beer posters on the walls and *oden* (winter stew) bubbling away on the counter. Look for the yellow-and-red sign and the big lantern.

### DAIKICHI Map p62 Yakitori ¥¥

☎ 771-3126; Higashiyama-ku, Sanjō-dōri Ōhashi higashi; 🕒 5pm-1am; dishes ¥3000; 🕒 3min walk from Higashiyama Station, Tōzai subway line

This is a good *yakitori* restaurant with a friendly owner. The place is a little brightly lit for our taste, but it's easy to enter and the *yakitori* is tasty. Daikichi is on Sanjō-dōri; look for the red lanterns outside.

### BAMBOO Map p62 Izakaya ¥¥

☎ 771-5559; Higashiyama-ku, Higashiyama Sanjō Higashi iru, Minami gawa 1st fl; 🕒 5.30pm-midnight, closed Thu; dishes ¥1000; 🕒 5min walk from Higashiyama Station, Tōzai subway line

Bamboo is one of Kyoto's more approachable *izakaya*. It's on Sanjō-dōri, near the mouth of a traditional, old shopping arcade. You can sit at the counter here and order a variety of typical *izakaya* dishes, watching as the chefs do their thing.

### YAGURA Map p62 Soba ¥

☎ 561-1035; Higashiyama-ku, Shijō-dōri, Yamatoji Nishi iru; 🕒 11am-9.30pm, closed Thu; soba ¥1000; 🕒 1min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line

Across from Minami-za (p142) kabuki theatre, this noodle specialist somehow reminds us of an American diner, with a row of wooden booths and mamas running the show. We recommend the *nishin soba* (¥1000). Yagura is located between a *rāmen* joint and a Japanese gift shop – look for the bowls of noodles in the window.

### ASUKA Map p62 Shokudō ¥

☎ 751-9809; Higashiyama-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Jinbū-michi Nishi iru; 🕒 11am-11pm; meals ¥1000; 🕒 3min walk from Higashiyama Station, Tōzai subway line

With an English menu, and a staff of friendly Kyoto *mama-sans* who are at home with foreign customers, this is a great place for a cheap lunch or dinner while sightseeing in the Higashiyama area. The tempura *mori-awase* (assorted tempura set) is a big pile of tempura for only ¥1000. Look for the red lantern and pictures of the set meals.

### RYŪMON Map p62 Chinese ¥

☎ 752-8181; Higashiyama-ku, Sanjō-dōri, Higashiōji Nishi iru, Kita gawa; 🕒 5pm-5am; dishes ¥1000; 🕒 3min walk from Higashiyama Station, Tōzai subway line

This place may look like a total dive but the food is reliable and authentic, as the crowds of Kyoto's Chinese residents will attest. There's no English menu but there is a picture menu and some of the waitresses can speak English. Décor is strictly Chinese kitsch, with the exception of the deer head over the cash register – still trying to figure that one out. Look for the food pictures out the front.

### MACHAPUCHARE Map p62 Obanzai/Nepalese ¥

☎ 525-1330; Higashiyama-ku, Sayamachi-dōri, Shōmen kudaru, Kamihoritsume-chō 290; 🕒 11.30am-8pm, closed Tue; lunch from ¥800; 🕒 5min walk from Shichijō Station, Keihan line This organic vegetarian restaurant serves a sublime vegetarian *obanzai* set. The post and beam construction of the place and the friendly owner are added attractions. The problem is that the restaurant keeps somewhat irregular hours and the *obanzai* is not always available. Get a Japanese speaker to call and check before trekking here. It's opposite Shōmen-yu *seno* (public bath).

### SANTŌKA Map p62 Rāmen ¥

☎ 532-1335; Higashiyama-ku, Sanjō kudaru Higashi gawa; 🕒 11am-2am; rāmen from ¥750; 🕒 1min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line The young chefs at this sleek restaurant dish out some seriously good Hokkaidō-style *rāmen*. You will be given a choice of three kinds of soup when you order: *shio* (salt), *shōyu* or miso – we highly recommend you go for the miso soup. For something totally decadent, try the *tokusen toroniku rāmen*, which is made from pork cheeks, of which only 200g can be obtained from one animal. The pork will come on a separate plate from the *rāmen* – just shovel it all into your bowl. The restaurant is located on the east side and ground floor of the new Kyōen restaurant and shopping complex.

### ISSEN YŌSHOKU Map p62 Okonomiyaki ¥

☎ 533-0001; Higashiyama-ku, Gion, Shijō Nawate kado; 🕒 11am-3am Mon-Sat, 10.30am-10pm Sun & public holidays; okonomiyaki ¥630; 🕒 5min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line Heaped with red ginger and green scallions, the *okonomiyaki* at this Gion institution is

a garish snack – which somehow seems fitting considering the surrounding neighbourhood. It's open to the elements and you can't miss the griddles out the front.

### MOMIJI-AN Map p62 Tea Shop ¥

☎ 561-2933; Higashiyama-ku, Maruyama-chō; ☎ 9am-5pm, closed Thu; tea & sweet beans ¥600; ⌚ 15min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line  
Located in a rustic old-Kyoto house overlooking Maruyama-kōen, this is a great spot for a rest while touring the Higashiyama area. Ask for the *usucha* (thin green tea; ¥600) and the staff will do the rest. It's just to the right of a traffic mirror, up a flight of steps.

### KASAGI-YA Map p62 Sweets ¥

☎ 561-9562; Higashiyama-ku, Kōdaiji, Masuya chō; ☎ 11am-6pm, closed Tue; sweets from ¥600; ⌚ 7min walk from Kiyomizumichi bus stop, bus 206 from Kyoto Station  
At Kasagi-ya, on Sannen-zaka near *Kiyomizu-dera* (p63), you can enjoy a nice cup of *matcha* and a variety of sweets. This funky old wooden shop has atmosphere to boot and a friendly staff – which makes it worth the wait if there's a queue. Highly recommended. It's hard to spot – you may have to ask one of the local shop owners.

### GION KOISHI Map p62 Tea Shop ¥

☎ 531-0331; Higashiyama-ku, Gion-chō, kita; ☎ 10.30am-7.30pm, closed 2nd & 4th Wed of each month; tea from ¥500; ⌚ 10min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line

If it's a hot summer's day and you need a cooling break, try this tea shop for some typical Japanese summer treats. The speciality here is *uji kintoki* (¥700), a mountain of shaved ice flavoured with green tea, sweetened milk and sweet beans (it tastes a lot better than it sounds, trust us). It's the fifth shop in from the corner, between two souvenir-craft shops.

### SENMONTE Map p62 Chinese ¥

☎ 531-2733; Higashiyama-ku, Hanami-kōji-dōri, Shinbashi kudarū Higashi gawa; ☎ 6pm-2am, closed Sun & public holidays; per 10 dumplings ¥460; ⌚ 5min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line  
This place serves one thing only: crisp fried *gyōza*, which come in lots of 10 and are washed down with beer or Chinese *raoshu* (rice wine). If you can break the record for the most *gyōza* eaten in one sitting, your

meal will be free and you'll receive – guess what? – more *gyōza* to take home. The last time we were here, the men's record was around 150 *gyōza*. Look for the red-and-white sign and the glass door.

### KAGIZEN YOSHIFUSA

Map p62 Sweets & Tea ¥

☎ 525-0011; Higashiyama-ku, Shijō-dōri; ☎ 9.30am-6pm, closed Mon; tea from ¥400; ⌚ 5min walk from Shijō Station, Keihan line  
This Gion institution is one of Kyoto's oldest and best-known *okashi-ya* (sweet shops). It sells a variety of traditional sweets and has a lovely tea room out the back where you can sample cold *kuzukiri* (transparent arrowroot noodles) served with a *kuro-mitsu* (sweet black sugar) dipping sauce, or just a nice cup of *matcha* and a sweet. All in all, it's one of the best spots in Gion for a rest. Look for the sweets in the window, the wide front and the *noren* (curtains in the window of a Japanese restaurant).

### AMAZON Map p62 Café ¥

☎ 561-8875; Higashiyama-ku, Keihan Shichijō Higashi iru, Shimohoritsume-chō 235; ☎ 7.30am-6pm, closed Wed; coffee from ¥400; ⌚ 2min walk from Shichijō Station, Keihan line  
This typical Japanese coffee shop, near *Sanjūsangen-dō* (p60), turns out some surprisingly good sandwiches and coffee; it's one of the few decent options in this area.

## NORTHERN HIGASHIYAMA

Northeast Kyoto has an excellent variety of restaurants and cafés, both Japanese and international. For those on a tight budget, the Hyakumamben intersection near Kyoto University is crammed with cheap student eateries. Due to the number of foreign students and teachers at the university, most places here are totally unfazed when a *'gaijin'* blunders in off the street.

### HYŌTEI Map pp68-9 Kaiseki ¥¥¥

☎ 771-4116; Sakyō-ku, Nanzen-ji Kusagawa-chō 35; ☎ 11am-7.30pm; meals from ¥4555; ⌚ 10min walk from Keage Station, Tōzai subway line  
The Hyōtei is considered to be one of Kyoto's oldest and most picturesque traditional restaurants. In the main building you can sample exquisite *kaiseki* courses in private

## JAPANESE SWEETS

The range of Japanese confections is so vast that were you to try one sweet a day, it would take a lifetime to try them all. Sweets in Japan (generically known as *wagashi*) are commonly made from some combination of sugar, beans and rice. The more exotic ingredients include cherry leaves, burdock root and seaweed.

*Wagashi* can be as delicious as they are beautiful; however, some visitors find the sweet, red adzuki-bean paste called *anko* rather off-putting. Used in many Japanese sweets, it can turn up in even the most innocuous-looking pastries.

Sweets are usually enjoyed outside mealtimes – traditional Japanese restaurants have no dessert menu – and the most exquisite were created for the tea ceremony, their sweetness the perfect counterpoint to the bitterness of *matcha* (powdered green tea).

As the tea ceremony originated in Kyoto, it stands to reason that the city has the greatest concentration of speciality sweet shops. Sampling a sweet is as easy as pie: step into a shop, gesture at an intriguing sweet in the display case and the accommodating staff will smartly wrap your delectable treat.

Kyoto's most ubiquitous sweet is a real crowd-pleaser – it's a bite-sized wafer of cinnamon-spiced *mochi* (pounded rice cake) called *yatsushashi*. These come in soft or crunchy varieties and the newest flavours are sesame, green tea and even strawberry. Beware: the triangular ones often hide a dab of that dreaded *anko*!

On the approach to *Kiyomizu-dera* (p63), you can watch the crunchy version being made by hand.

One of the best places to try Japanese sweets in refined surroundings is *Kagizan Yoshifusa* (opposite).

tea rooms. Set meals are available from ¥4500. It's very close to the *Kyoto International Community House* (p112) and *Nanzen-ji* (p66). You can't miss the traditional building.

### OKUTAN Map pp68-9 Tofu ¥¥

☎ 771-8709; Sakyō-ku, Nanzen-ji, Fukuchi-chō 86-30; ☎ 10.30am-5pm, closed Thu; set meals ¥3000; ⌚ 10min walk from Keage Station, Tōzai subway line

Just outside the precincts of *Nanzen-ji* (p66), you'll find Okutan, a restaurant inside the luxurious garden of Chōshō-in. This is a popular place that has specialised in vegetarian temple food for hundreds of years. Try a course of *yudōfu* together with vegetable side dishes (¥3000). It can get crowded here in the cherry-blossom and autumn-foliage seasons.

### GROTTO Map pp68-9 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 771-0606; Sakyō-ku, Jōdōji Nishida-chō 114; ☎ 6pm-midnight, closed Sun; meals ¥4500; ⌚ 3min walk from Ginkakuji-michi bus stop, bus 5 from Kyoto Station

This stylish little place on Imadegawa-dōri serves a killer dinner set menu that will take you through the major tastes in the Japanese gastronomy. It's a great way to spend two or three hours with someone special. Reservations are highly recommended and last orders are at 10pm.

### OKARIBA Map pp68-9 Wild Game ¥¥

☎ 751-7790; Sakyō-ku, Okazaki, Higashitenno-chō 43-4; ☎ 5-10.30pm, closed Mon; dinner ¥4000;

⌚ 1min walk from Higashitenno-chō bus stop, bus 203 from Kyoto Station

For an experience you won't soon forget, try Okariba, near *Hotel Heian no Mori Kyoto* (p153). If it crawls, walks or swims, it's probably on the menu. The *inoshishi* (wild boar) barbecue is a good start. Those who don't eat meat can try the fresh *ayu* (Japanese trout). Look for the sign of the hunting pig out the front.

### TORITO Map pp68-9 Yakitori ¥¥

☎ 752-4144; Sakyō-ku, Higashi Marutamachi 9-5; ☎ 5.30pm-1am, closed Sun; dinner ¥2000-4000; ⌚ 2min walk from Marutamachi Station, Keihan line

This is part of the new wave of *yakitori* restaurants in Kyoto that are updating the old standards in interesting and tasty ways. It's a crowded spot, with a counter and a few small tables. The food is very good and will likely appeal to non-Japanese palates. Dishes include *kamo rōsu* (duck roast; ¥1050), *negima* (long onions and chicken; ¥294 for two sticks) and *tsukune* (chicken meatballs; ¥482). It's near the corner of Marutamachi and Kawabata-dōri; you can see inside to the counter.

### KUSHI HACHI Map pp68-9 Kushikatsu ¥¥

☎ 751-6789; Sakyō-ku, Imadegawa, Kitashirakawa Nishi iru, Minami gawa; ☎ 5-11.30pm, closed Mon; dinner from ¥2000; ⌚ 5min walk from Ginkakuji-Michi bus stop, bus 5 from Kyoto Station  
Kushi Hachi, part of a popular Kyoto chain, is a fun spot to sample *kushikatsu*, a fried

dish that is well suited to Western tastes. We enjoy sitting at the counter and watching as the frenetic chefs work the grills and deep-fryers. With a picture/English menu, ordering is a snap. Look for the garish lantern out the front.

### BOUCHON CAYENNE Map pp68–9 French ¥¥

☎ 771-3340; Sakyō-ku, Higashiōji-dōri, Niōmondōri *okudaru*, Kita Monzen-chō 499; ☎ noon-2pm & 6-9.30pm, closed Mon & 2nd Sun of each month; lunch sets ¥1600, dinner from ¥1500; ⌚ 7min walk from Higashiyama Station, Tōzai subway line

We always feel a little guilty eating at this intimate French place, especially at lunch. It just doesn't seem right to be getting this kind of food for these prices. The chef does a brilliant egg tart and is a good hand with lamb dishes. The menu is in French and Japanese. It's near the corner; look for the grey front and the English sign.

### SUNNY PLACE

Map pp68–9 Japanese Vegetarian ¥¥

☎ 722-1738; Kita-ku, Kamigamo Iwagakuiuchi-chō; ☎ 11.30am-9pm, closed Mon; set meals from ¥1200; ⌚ 5min walk from Kitayama Station, Karasuma subway line

Sunny Place is a fine little organic vegetarian eatery not far from the Hyakumamben intersection (within walking distance of *Ginkaku-ji* (p71)). It has a long wooden counter at which everyone tends to chat with both their neighbour and the friendly owner. The standard set includes a nonmeat protein dish (such as tempeh), three vegetable sides, rice and miso soup. Sunny Place is a bit tricky to find. Starting from the Hyakumamben crossing, walk west on Imadegawa-dōri to the first set of traffic lights; turn right and walk about 200m (you'll cross one fairly large street). It will be on the right; there's usually an English sign out the front.

### ODEN Map pp68–9 Udon ¥¥

☎ 771-8994; Sakyō-ku, Jōdo-ji, Ishibashi-chō 74; ☎ 11am-10pm, closed Thu; noodle dishes ¥1000; ⌚ 1min walk from Ginkaku-ji-mae bus stop, bus 5 from Kyoto Station

This elegant noodle shop is named after the thick white noodles that are served in a hot broth with a selection of seven fresh vegetables. Just say 'omen' and you'll be given your choice of hot or cold noodles, a bowl of soup to dip them in and a plate of vegetables (you put these into the soup

along with some sesame seeds). It's a great bowl of noodles but that's not the end of the story: everything on the frequently changing menu is delicious. You can get a fine salad here, brilliant *tori sansho yaki* (chicken cooked with Japanese mountain spice), good tempura and occasionally a nice plate of sashimi. Best of all, there's a menu in English. It's about five minutes' walk from *Ginkaku-ji* (p71) in a traditional Japanese house with a lantern outside. Highly recommended.

### KAILASH Map pp68–9 Organic Café ¥

☎ 752-3127; Sakyō-ku, Shōgoin Sannō-chō 19-2; ☎ restaurant 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-8pm, café 11.30am-8pm, closed Wed & 2nd & 4th Thu of each month; lunch sets ¥850; ⌚ 2min walk from Marutamachi Station, Keihan line

In an atmospheric old Japanese town house, this new organic restaurant is a very welcome addition to the Kyoto restaurant scene. The set lunch here usually includes a salad, rice, *tsukemono*, soup and a main dish. It has an English menu. We like to relax at the low tables upstairs. Look for the plants.

### CAFÉ CARINHO Map pp68–9 Café ¥

☎ 752-3636; Sakyō-ku, Imadegawa-dōri-Shirakawa; ☎ 11am-10pm Tue-Thu, to 11pm Fri-Sun; lunch from ¥750; ⌚ 5min walk from Ginkaku-ji-Michi bus stop, bus 5 from Kyoto Station This excellent little café near *Ginkaku-ji* (p71) is one of the only places in town where you can find proper bagel sandwiches. It also serves daily specials, light meals and excellent tea and coffee (from ¥400). There is wifi for those with laptops. The owner speaks English and Portuguese, which makes ordering a breeze. All told, this is one of the best spots in the neighbourhood for a drink or meal.

### EARTH KITCHEN COMPANY

Map pp68–9 Bentō ¥

☎ 771-1897; Sakyō-ku, Kawabata, Marutamachi-dōri, Higashi Marutamachi; ☎ 10.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 3.30pm Sat, closed Sun & public holidays; lunch ¥700; ⌚ 1min walk from Marutamachi Station, Keihan line

Located on Marutamachi-dōri near the Kamo-gawa, this tiny spot seats just two people but does a bustling business serving tasty takeaway lunch *bentō*. If you fancy a picnic lunch for your temple-hopping, and the ease of an English menu, this is the place.

### AYATORI Map pp68–9 Shokudō ¥

☎ 752-2468; Sakyō-ku, Yoshida Izumiden-chō 1-86; ☎ 1.30-2pm & 5.30-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 5.30-9.30pm Sat; katsudon ¥680; ⌚ 10min walk from Demachiyana Station, Keihan line

Very close to the Hyakumamben intersection, this place is your classic *shokudō*. It's a friendly spot that is popular with local workers, resident foreigners and university students. A variety of standard fish and meat set dishes are served, which average around ¥800. In winter, the *kaki furai teishoku* (fried oyster set meal; ¥1100) is lovely. Strangely, considering this is a Japanese restaurant, Ayatori also serves a wonderful potato salad. English menus are available. To find this place, look for the big red-and-black sign.

### KARAKO Map pp68–9 Rāmen ¥

☎ 752-8234; Sakyō-ku, Okazaki Tokusei-chō 12-3; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6pm-midnight, closed Tue; rāmen from ¥650; ⌚ 15min walk from Sanjō Station, Keihan line

Karako is our favourite *rāmen* restaurant in Kyoto. While it's not much on atmosphere, the *rāmen* here is excellent – the soup is thick and rich and the *chashū* (pork slices) melt in your mouth. We recommend that you ask for the *kotteri* (thick soup) *rāmen*. Look for the lantern outside.

### CAFÉ PEACE Map pp68–9 Vegetarian ¥

☎ 707-6856; Sakyō-ku, Higashiōji-dōri-Imadegawa, Hyakumamben; ☎ 11.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-9.30pm Sun & public holidays; drinks from ¥550, dishes from ¥600; ⌚ 10min walk from Demachiyana Station, Keihan line

This is a pleasant spot for a cuppa or a light organic vegetarian meal. It's a little cramped but the soothing décor makes up for this. Lunch sets include green curry, sandwiches and Japanese fare. The English menu will help with ordering. Café Peace is on the 3rd floor but there's a small sign at street level.

### BUTTERCUPS Map pp68–9 Café ¥

☎ 751-7837; Sakyō-ku, Jōdo-ji, Shimobanba-chō 103; ☎ noon-11pm, closed Tue; coffee from ¥300, meals from ¥580; ⌚ 5min walk from Kinrinshakomae bus stop, bus 5 from Kyoto Station

Buttercups is a favourite of the local expat community and a great place for lunch, dinner or a cup of coffee. The menu (available in English) is international and the vibe is chilled and arty. There are usually pictures, paintings or photos on display.

Dishes include Mexican rice, fish and chips, salads and tacos. Look for the plants and whiteboard menu outside.

### FALAFEL GARDEN Map pp68–9 Israeli ¥

☎ 712-1856; Sakyō-ku, Tanaka Shimoyanagi-chō 3-16; ☎ 11am-9.30pm, closed Wed; sandwiches from ¥500; ⌚ 2min walk from exit 7, Demachiyana Station, Keihan line

Close to the Keihan and Eizan lines' Demachiyana Station, this funky Israeli-run place has excellent falafel and a range of other dishes, as well as offering a set menu (¥1200). We like the style of the open-plan converted Japanese house and the minigarden out the back, but the main draw is those tasty falafels! It's easy to spot, across the street from a post office. Last orders are at 9pm.

### ZAC BARAN Map pp68–9 International ¥

☎ 751-9748; Sakyō-ku, Shōgo-in, Sannō-chō 18; ☎ 6pm-4am; dishes from ¥500; ⌚ 5min walk from Kumanojinja-mae bus stop, bus 206 from Kyoto Station

Near the *Kyoto Handicraft Centre* (p113), this is a good spot for a light meal or a drink. It serves a variety of spaghetti dishes as well as a good lunch special. Look for the picture of the Freak Brothers near the downstairs entrance. If you fancy dessert, step upstairs to the Second House Cake Works.

### HINODE UDON Map pp68–9 Udon & Soba ¥

☎ 751-9251; Sakyō-ku, Nanzenji, Kitanobō-chō 36; ☎ 11am-6pm, closed Sun; noodles from ¥400; ⌚ 5min walk from Higashitenno-chō bus stop, bus 5 from Kyoto Station

Filling noodle and rice dishes are served at this pleasant little shop with an English menu. Plain *udon* is only ¥400 but we recommend you spring for the *nabeyaki udon* (pot-baked *udon* in broth) for ¥800. This is a good spot for lunch when temple-hopping near *Ginkaku-ji* (p71) or *Nanzen-ji* (p66).

### SHINSHINDŌ NOTRE PAIN Map pp68–9 Café ¥

☎ 701-4121; Sakyō-ku, Kitashirakawa, Oiwake-chō 88; ☎ 8am-6pm, closed Tue; coffee from ¥340; ⌚ 2min walk from Hyakumamben bus stop, bus 206 from Kyoto Station

This atmospheric old Kyoto coffee shop is a favourite of Kyoto University students for its curry and bread lunch set (¥780), which is kind of an acquired taste. It's located near the university. Look for the glazed tile bricks and the big window out the front.



There's a small English sign and English menus are available.

**YATAI** Map pp68–9 Yatai ¥  
Sakyō-ku, Imadegawa-dōri; ☎ dusk to midnight; dishes from ¥300; ⌚ 10min walk from Demachiyana Station, Keihan line

This *yatai* (tent) pops up along Imadegawa-dōri every evening and serves a variety of food to accompany beer and sake, such as *yakitori*, *oden* and meatballs. It's fun but don't expect English to be spoken (pointing at what you want is the easiest way to go).

## NORTHWEST KYOTO

There are many good restaurants scattered across this largely residential area. As they are so spread out, plan ahead and find one located near sights that you want to see. Of course, if you don't feel like doing any special planning, you will find the usual standard-issue *shokudō* near the main sights in the neighbourhood.

**SARACA NISHIJIN** Map p74 Café ¥  
☎ 432-5075; Kita-ku, Murasakino Higashifujinomori-chō 11-1; ☎ noon-10pm, closed Wed; lunch from ¥900; 🚶 7min walk from Daitoku-ji-mae bus stop, bus 206 from Kyoto Station

This is one of Kyoto's most interesting cafés – it's built inside an old *sentō* (public bath-house) and the original tiles have been preserved. Light meals and coffee (¥400) are the staples here. The *honjitsu Nishijin* (daily Nishijin lunch; ¥890) plate is decent value. Service can be slow and scattered but the interesting ambience makes it worth a look. It's near *Funaoka Onsen* (p76) and is easy to spot.

**KANEI** Map p74 udon & soba ¥  
☎ 441-8283; Kita-ku, Murasakino Higashifujinomori-chō 11-1; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5-7pm, closed Mon; noodles from ¥850; 🚶 7min walk from Daitoku-ji-mae bus stop, bus 206 from Kyoto Station

A small traditional place not far from *Funaoka Onsen* (see the boxed text, p76), Kanei is the place to go if you're a *soba* connoisseur – the noodles are made by hand here and are delicious. The owners don't speak much English, so here's what to order: *zaru soba* (¥850) or *kake soba* (*soba* in a broth; ¥900). Note that handmade *soba* quickly loses its taste and texture, so we recommend that you eat it quickly. The servings are small and the dishes are only likely to please real *soba* fans. Kanei is on the corner, a few metres west of *Saraca Nishijin* (above).

**TOYOUKE-JAYA** Map p74 Tofu ¥  
☎ 462-3662; Kamigyō-ku, Imadegawa-dōri-Onmae Nishi iru; ☎ 11am-3pm, closed Thu; set meals from ¥650; 🚶 1min walk from Kitanotenmangū-mae bus stop, bus 101 from Kyoto Station

Locals line up for the tofu lunch sets at this famous restaurant across from *Kitano Tenmangū* (p76). Set meals start at ¥650 and usually include tofu, rice and miso soup. Problem is, it gets very crowded, especially when a market is on at the shrine. If you can get here when there's no queue, pop in for a healthy meal.

**TACO TORA** Map p74 Tako Yaki ¥  
☎ 461-9292; Kamigyō-ku, Imadegawa-dōri-Nanahonmatsu Nishi iru; ☎ 5pm-2am, closed Tue; per 9 octopus balls ¥600; 🚶 5min walk from Kitanotenmangū-mae bus stop, bus 101 from Kyoto Station

Try this spot for Kyoto's best *tako yaki* (fried, battered octopus balls – no, not those balls). The place doesn't have much in the way of ambience, but, then, what *tako yaki* place does? Be careful: the balls are served piping hot and you can easily burn your mouth if you're not patient. It's near *Kitano Tenmangū* (p76).

## ARASHIYAMA & SAGANO

The area to the far west of Kyoto is a hugely popular destination with both foreign and Japanese travellers and it's packed with eateries, many of which serve the speciality of the area: *yudōfu*. Simpler meals can be had in the *shokudō* that line the street outside Arashiyama Station.

**HIRANOYA** Map p80 Tea & Kaiseki ¥¥¥  
☎ 861-0359; Ukyō-ku, Saga Toriimoto Sennō-chō 16; ☎ 11.30am-9pm; tea ¥840, dinner from ¥15,000; 🚶 5min walk from Otaginetsu-ji-mae bus stop, bus 72 from Kyoto Station

Located next to the Atago Torii (Shintō shrine gate), this thatched-roof restaurant is about as atmospheric as they get. While you can sample full-course *kaiseki* meals here from ¥15,000 (by telephone reservation in Japanese only), we prefer to soak up the atmosphere over a simple cup of *matcha* for a relatively modest ¥840 (it comes with a traditional sweet). It's the perfect way to cool off after a long slog around the temples of Arashiyama and Sagano. Just ask for 'o-cha' and you're away.

**YUDŌFU SAGANO** Map p80 Tofu ¥¥  
☎ 871-6946; Ukyō-ku, Saga, Tenryū-ji, Susukinobaba-chō 45; ☎ 11am-7pm; lunch & dinner from ¥3800; ⌚ 15min walk from Saga Arashiyama Station, Sagano line

This is a popular place to sample *yudōfu*. It's fairly casual, with a spacious dining room. You can usually eat here without having to wait and there's both indoor and outdoor seating. Look for the old cartwheels outside.

**SHIGETSU** Map p80 Buddhist Vegetarian ¥¥  
☎ 882-9725; Ukyō-ku, Saga, Tenryū-ji, Susukinobaba-chō 68; ☎ 11am-2pm; lunch from ¥3000; ⌚ 5min walk from Keifuku Arashiyama Station, Keifuku Arashiyama line

To sample *shōjin ryōri* (Buddhist vegetarian cuisine), try Shigetsu in the precinct of *Tenryū-ji* (p80). This healthy fare has been sustaining monks for more than a thousand years in Japan, so it will probably get you through an afternoon of sightseeing, although carnivores may be left craving something. Shigetsu has beautiful garden views.

**MIKATZUKI** Map p80 Japanese ¥  
☎ 861-0445; Ukyō-ku, Saga, Tenryū-ji, Tsukurimichi-chō 35-2; ☎ 11am-5pm, closed Tue; meals ¥600-1800; ⌚ 10min walk from Saga Arashiyama Station, Sagano line

There are several *shokudō* on the main drag in Arashiyama and this is one of them. The thing that distinguishes this place is its English menu and the fact that it is a little more spacious than the others. Dishes include the typical *shokudō* noodle and rice classics. The tempura *teishoku* (¥1600) gives value for money and should power you through a few hours of Arashiyama sightseeing. The sign is in Japanese; it's black-and-white and one of the Japanese characters looks like a bullseye.

**KAMEYAMA-YA** Map p80 Japanese ¥  
☎ 861-0759; Ukyō-ku, Saga, Kamenoo-chō; ☎ 10am-5pm (roughly), closed irregularly; meals ¥550-1500; ⌚ 15min walk from Saga Arashiyama Station, Sagano line

We love this semi-outdoor restaurant on the banks of the Hozu-gawa. The service can be gruff, the food is only pretty good, but the location is impossible to beat. Dishes include tempura over rice and noodles. There is no English sign but there are a couple of vending machines near the entrance.

**YOSHIDA-YA** Map p80 Noodles ¥  
☎ 861-0213; Ukyō-ku, Saga, Tenryū-ji, Tsukurimichi-chō 20-24; ☎ 10am-6pm, closed Tue; lunch from ¥800; ⌚ 2min walk from Keifuku Arashiyama Station, Keifuku Arashiyama line

This quaint and friendly little *teishoku-ya* (set-meal restaurant) is the perfect place to grab a simple lunch while in Arashiyama. All the standard *teishoku* favourites are on offer, including things such as *oyakodon* (egg and chicken over a bowl of rice) for ¥1000. You can also cool off here with a refreshing *uji kintoki* for ¥600. There is no English sign; the restaurant is the first place south of the station and it has a rustic front.

**KOMICHI** Map p80 Café ¥  
☎ 872-5313; Ukyō-ku, Saga, Nison-in Monzen Ōjōin-chō 23; ☎ 10am-5pm, closed Wed; matcha ¥600; ⌚ 20min walk from Keifuku Arashiyama Station, Keifuku Arashiyama line

This friendly little teahouse is perfectly located along the Arashiyama tourist trail. In addition to hot and cold tea and coffee, it serves *uji kintoki* in summer and a variety of light noodle dishes year-round. The picture menu helps with ordering. The sign is green and black on a white background.

## KITAYAMA AREA

If you're heading up to any of the three villages in the Kitayama area – Kurama, Kibune or Ōhara – you don't need to worry about packing a lunch: there are several restaurants in each. Ōhara and Kurama restaurants tend towards standard *shokudō*, while Kibune is a bit more of a fine-dining destination.

## ŌHARA

There are several restaurants around the main gate of Sanzen-in and on the path to Jakkō-in. Seryō-jaya (below) is of particular note.

**SERYŌ-JAYA** Map p84 Japanese ¥¥  
☎ 744-2301; Sakyō-ku, Ōhara, Shōrinin-chō 24; ☎ 11am-5pm; lunch sets from ¥2756; 🚶 10min walk from Ōhara bus stop, Kyoto bus 17 or 18 from Kyoto Station

Just by the entry gate to *Sanzen-in* (p83), Seryō-jaya serves wholesome *sansai ryōri* (mountain-vegetable cooking), fresh river fish and *soba* noodles topped with grated yam. There is outdoor seating in warmer months. To find this place, look for the food models.

## KURAMA & KIBUNE

Most of the restaurants in Kurama are clustered on the main road outside Kurama-dera's main gate.

Visitors to Kibune from June to September should not miss the chance to dine at one of the picturesque restaurants beside the Kibunegawa. Known as *kawa-doko*, meals are served on platforms suspended over the river as cool water flows underneath. Most of the restaurants offer a lunch special for around ¥3000. For a *kaiseki* spread (¥5000 to ¥10,000), have a Japanese speaker call to reserve it in advance. In the cold months you can dine indoors overlooking the river.

### NAKAYOSHI Map p85 Kaiseki ¥¥

☎ 741-2000; Sakyō-ku, Kurama, Kibune-chō 71;  
🕒 11am-7pm; lunch from ¥3500, *kaiseki* dinner from ¥8500; 🚗 5min taxi ride from Kibune-guchi Station, Eizan line

One of the more reasonably priced restaurants in the area, Nakayoshi serves a lunch *bentō* for ¥3500. It has dining platforms over the river and the food is well prepared.

### TOCHIGIKU Map p85 Kaiseki ¥¥

☎ 741-5555; Sakyō-ku, Kurama, Kibune-chō 17;  
🕒 11.30am-9pm, closed irregularly; *sukiyaki* from ¥8000; 🚗 5min taxi ride from Kibune-guchi Station, Eizan line

Try this lovely riverside restaurant for chicken and beef *sukiyaki*, wild boar stew and *kaiseki* sets. There is a small English sign. Last orders are at 7.30pm.

### HIROBUN Map p85 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 741-2147; Sakyō-ku, Kurama, Kibune-chō;  
🕒 11am-10pm; noodles ¥1200, *kaiseki* from ¥7000; 🚗 5min taxi ride from Kibune-guchi Station, Eizan line

Here you can try *nagashi-somen* (¥1200), which are thin noodles that flow to you in globs down a split-bamboo gutter; just pluck them out and slurp away. This dish is served until 5pm. To find Hirobun, look for the black-and-white sign and the lantern. It's at the top of the village.

### BENIYA Map p85 Kaiseki ¥¥

☎ 741-2041; Sakyō-ku, Kurama, Kibune-chō 17;  
🕒 11.30am-7.30pm; meals from ¥3000; 🚗 5min taxi ride from Kibune-guchi Station, Eizan line  
This elegant riverside restaurant serves *kaiseki* sets for ¥6000, ¥8000 or ¥10,000,

depending on size. There is a wooden sign with white lettering out the front.

### YŌSHŪJI Map p85 Japanese ¥¥

☎ 741-2848; Sakyō-ku, Kurama, Honmachi 1074;  
🕒 10am-6pm, closed Tue; meals from ¥1050;  
🚗 5min walk from Kurama Station, Eizan line

Yōshūji serves superb *shōjin ryōri* in a delightful old Japanese farmhouse with an *irori* (open hearth). The house special, a sumptuous selection of vegetarian dishes served in red lacquered bowls, is called *kurama-yama shōjin zen* (¥2500). If you're just wanting a quick bite, try the *uzu-soba* (*soba* topped with mountain vegetables; ¥1050). It's halfway up the steps leading to the main gate of *Kurama-dera* (p85); look for the orange lanterns out the front.

### ORGANIC CAFÉ AURORA Map p85 Café ¥

☎ 741-5178; Sakyō-ku, Kuramahonmachi 308;  
🕒 10.30am-6pm, closed irregularly; lunch ¥1000;  
🚗 3min walk from Kurama Station, Eizan line

This fine little café in a traditional Japanese house is a good spot for a cuppa before or after visiting the temple. You can choose from 25 varieties of tea. Simple meals are also served. The small garden is nice to gaze out on as you sip your tea. It's a few minutes' walk up the road from the station, on the right. There is an English sign.

### ABURAYA-SHOKUDŌ Map p85 Shokudō ¥

☎ 741-2009; Sakyō-ku, Kuramahonmachi 252;  
🕒 9.30am-5.30pm, closed last 3 days of each month; meals from ¥800; 🚗 5min walk from Kurama Station, Eizan line

Just down the steps from the main gate of *Kurama-dera* (p85), this classic old-style *shokudō* reminds us of what Japan was like before it got rich. The *sansai teishoku* (¥1700) is a delightful selection of vegetables, rice and *soba* topped with grated yam. Simpler noodle and rice dishes can be had for around ¥800. It's on the corner.

### KIBUNE CLUB Map p85 Café ¥

☎ 741-2146; Sakyō-ku, Kurama, Kibune-chō 76;  
🕒 11.30am-6pm; coffee from ¥450; 🚗 5min taxi ride from Kibune-guchi Station, Eizan line

The exposed wooden beams and open, airy feel of this rustic café make it a great spot for a cuppa while exploring Kibune. In the winter, the staff sometimes crank up the wood stove, which makes the place rather cosy. It's easy to spot.

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