

Special Interview

Ramen Samurai

“Nantsuttei”

Ichiro Furuya



Ichiro Furuya, 44, is one of the most well-known ramen legends in Japan. He runs four ramen shops in Japan and two in Singapore. His ramen, known for its rich pork broth and original garlic oil known as ma-yu, has fascinated everyone from locals to celebrity chefs; and his outlets are notorious for their long queues.

Furuya grew up in Kanagawa prefecture, a suburb of Tokyo where his mother ran a local eatery. Many of their customers were lone blue-collar workers from the poor countryside and this friendly eatery was like their second home. Furuya's mother remembered every regular's name and would say "okaeri (welcome home)" to each of them whenever they stepped into her shop after work.

Although he admired his mother, he didn't aspire to follow in her footsteps. He spent most of his teenage life riding motorcycles and fighting. After dropping out of high school, he made his living from head to mouth.

Although his journey as a ramen chef was rough in the beginning, his shop soon acquired one of the longest queues at a ramen shop in just a few years. Furuya recalls, "At my mother's eatery, an entire course meal was placed on one tray. I thought that ramen was like that, except everything is thrown

into one bowl. If it is a course meal, you can avoid any dish that you don't like. But ramen is different. One slurp can determine the whole quality of a bowl." When asked about how to establish the quality, he says in a deep voice, "Never neglect the basics. Take the time and effort to make every bowl of ramen."

His ramen is known for its "blackness" because of the black ma-yu sauce, which he creates by frying the garlic in 7 different lengths of time before turning it into a paste by adding sesame oil. This brings the key flavor to his broth, which is made by boiling pork bones in water for 24 hours. He keeps a record of the humidity and temperature (including that of the flour and water) every single day in order to keep noodle quality consistent. He also adjusts the ingredients of the soup according to the subtle differences.

For the new brand launch of "Hachifukumaruru" at Cuppage, he uses only chicken bone for his broth. "I found that many people living in Singapore avoid ramen because of their religious practices. But I want everyone to try it!" At Hachifukumaruru, they have fried chicken ramen which is totally free from pork. He also invented a new ma-yu for Hachifukumaruru, using oil from chicken and spring onions. The red-colored ma-yu is flavored with chili to cater to the local taste.

Although he has achieved a legendary reputation in the industry (and despite his burliness), he is surprisingly modest and friendly that it makes you wonder if his mother ran her homey eatery in the same way."

"Nowadays, noodle factories are so advanced that they can easily mimic my broth and noodle. I say it's fine," Furuya says. "We do not make it simplified. We make everything when an order comes in. For instance, we don't slice the roasted pork in advance to make it convenient for us. If you do that, the sliced surface will be exposed to the air and the flavor will change. We also prepare our soup order by order. This process makes a huge difference in the long run and keeps our reputation high."

Website
Nantsuttei:
<http://www.nantsu.com/sg>

Hachifukumaruru:
<http://hachifukumaruru.com/jp>

Ramen \$12
N: medium straight
S: pork



Spicy Red Oil \$12
N: medium straight
S: chicken



Nantsuttei 【なんつっ亭】

Tel. 6337-7166
9 Raffles Blvd, Millenia Walk #P3-06 PARCO Marina Bay
www.nantsu.com/sg/

Nantsuttei was voted the Ramen of the Year for 5 consecutive years and was eventually inducted into "The Ramen Hall of Fame" in Japan. The rich soup has a black film made of sesame oil blended with garlic, which is very creamy and tasty, but not overly thick and salty.



Hachifukumaruru 【八福丸】

Tel. 6737-9713
160 Orchard Rd. #01-13 OG Orchard Point
<http://hachifukumaruru.com>

As a sister outlet of the award-winning Nantsuttei, this shop offers a new creation by the shop's celebrity master chef: "spicy red oil soup". Using milky-white chicken broth that has been boiled slowly for 12 hours, spiced chill sesame oil is added to cater to Singaporean taste buds.

