

OKONOMIYAKI (“AS YOU LIKE IT”) PANCAKES WITH BONITO FLAKES

SONOKO SAKAI DECEMBER 2019 JAPANESE HOME COOKING

The Japanese version of a savory pancake is called *okonomiyaki*. It is made with fresh eggs, flour, and water and seasoned with soy sauce and *tonkatsu* sauce. Shredded cabbage is also part of the equation; it gives the pancake its soft texture and subtly sweet flavor. Protein toppings include combinations of meat, shrimp, and vegetables. When the pancake is cooked, it is topped with mayonnaise and *tonkatsu* sauce and garnished with bonito flakes and *aonori* (dried green seaweed flakes) or crumbled nori. *Aonori* is available at Japanese markets. I prefer the “naked” flavor of the *okonomiyaki*, so I usually skip the mayo and go easy on the *tonkatsu* sauce or eat it with soy sauce.

YIELD 8 pancakes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups (180 g) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 1 ¼ cups (296 ml) whole milk or milk of your choice
- 8 ounces (230 g) cabbage, thinly sliced
- 2 scallions, white and light green parts chopped
- ½ yellow, green, or red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 8 ounces (230 g) boneless chicken, shrimp, crab, or sukiyaki-style beef or pork, cut into ½-inch (12 mm) pieces
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoon or more homemade or store-bought *Tonkatsu* Sauce
- ½ cup (4 g) bonito flakes
- ½ cup (4 g) crumbled nori

PREPARATION

1. Whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg and milk. Add the flour mixture and mix until just blended. The batter should be quite thin. Add the chopped vegetables to the batter and mix well.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Pour ¼ cup (60 ml) of the batter to make a 6-inch (15 cm) pancake. Cook until medium brown, about 1 minute. Place ¼ of the meat on top of the pancake and then flip the meat side down. Turn heat to low and cook until the bottom of the pancake is browned, the meat is thoroughly cooked, and the vegetables are tender—about 10 minutes. Repeat until the batter is used up.
4. To serve, brush the pancake with mayonnaise and tonkatsu sauce, or soy sauce. Sprinkle with the bonito flakes and crumbled nori. Eat while piping hot.