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Tokyo on the Move - Episode 3 (last episode) by Michael Kanert

Tokyo: Food to Die for, at Prices That Will Keep You Alive



It's become near-cliche to note that Tokyo has more Michelin stars than any city on the planet — a title it's held since the Japanese capital got its first Michelin Guide in 2007.

But what's less reported is that a superlative dining experience isn't limited to the

cream of Tokyo's crop — in fact, excellent food is so common here that it's rare to find a bad meal anywhere in the city.

Michelin will send deep-pocketed diners to the posh spots hugging the outskirts of Tokyo's Imperial Palace, ensconced among the area's big banks and bustling national government buildings. But a little-known gourmet hub — even among locals — can be found just northwest of Shinjuku Station, where I had the pleasure of living for five years.

Head north past the hole-in-the-wall bars of Omoide Yokocho, then duck left off the main drag to find a bounty of hidden restaurants offering delectable dishes at reasonable prices. My personal top choice is the ever-crowded Wine no Ruisuke, which still offered both a lively milieu and an immaculately roasted whole chicken for just under 1,900 yen — or about \$16.50 — when last I visited in September 2023.



Even Tokyo's street-level food — touted in the tourist pamphlets as "B-class gourmet" — is a cut above, particularly at the price.

When working in Ebisu, I'd often venture under the station steps to take a stool at Kamukura Dining, where I can still slurp a huge bowl of ramen for less than 1,000 yen, or about \$8.70 — less than half what I've paid at a "top" ramen shop in Toronto, for noodles that were so inadequate I've never gone back.

In fact, I've been so starved for good, cheap Japanese food that my most recent

Tokyo trip featured not one but two stops at a Yoshinoya gyudon shop, savouring a bowl of rice and juicy beef strips for less than 500 yen — or about \$4.

Add the fact that you never have to tip, not to mention Japan's decades of negligible inflation and the teetering value of today's yen, and there's never been a better — or cheaper — time to dine in Tokyo.

Photo credit: Michael Kanert



Michael Kanert is a writer, editor and Japan travel specialist who lived in Japan from 2001 to 2017. While there, he served as managing editor of Tokyo city magazine Metropolis, and editor-in-chief of Japan travel site AllAbout-Japan. He also travelled the country as a regional tourism advisor. Michael now lives in Kitchener, Ontario, with his wife and son, and travels back to Japan as often as he's able.

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