What is Utsunomiya Gyoza? Why did the gyoza culture spread in Utsunomiya?

People who come to Utsunomiya City from outside of the Tochigi Prefecture all say “there are a surprising number of gyoza specialty restaurants in Utsunomiya.” One of the popular explanations is that it started from the returning settlers who were dispatched from Utsunomiya to the northeastern area of China during WWII, as well as the demobilized 14th Division of the Imperial Japanese Army (whose HQ was in Utsunomiya). Having been exposed to the local gyoza culture in China, it is said that regulations that “gyoza is delicious” had begun to spread in Utsunomiya since their return. What is unique is that in China, the “southern gyoza (boiled gyoza dumplings)” is common but what later developed in Utsunomiya is the “yaki gyoza (pan-fried gyoza dumplings).” The savory flavor must have been a good match with the Japanese taste buds.

What was the reason for gyoza culture becoming pervasive in Utsunomiya?

As a reason the gyoza culture became so pervasive in Utsunomiya, the point is raised that the Utsunomiya climate was suited to producing ingredients of the gyoza. Flour used to make the skin, napa cabbage, cabbage, leek, and pork used in the filling; these are all things that have been produced within the Tochigi Prefecture from old times. Clean water, the fertile earth, the abundant sunshine as well as the agricultural products that grow well with the help of these blessings are a large factor that supported Utsunomiya’s gyoza culture.

The progression of Utsunomiya Gyoza culture is unstoppable!

Often times, so called “local gourmet” have a defined format of “how it should be,” the Utsunomiya gyoza does not have that. Not only is there the traditional flavor passed on from old times, but each restaurant works on making gyoza with creativity in details of skin, filling, size and even how it is pan-fried to make “Utsunomiya Gyoza” with great individuality. Within the city, there are total of about 300 gyoza specialty restaurants and restaurants that offers gyoza menu, and the price is generally around 200 to 300 yen for an individual serving(usually 6 pcs.). The price range makes it easily accessible for students to eat as a snack. This is all the more reason to find joy in casually walking around to taste and compare to find your favorite. We would definitely recommend a tour to browse “Utsunomiya Gyoza” for an encounter with your own favorite dish.