

## Vancouver's Japadog phenomeon: Hot dogs, Japanese style

With two carts on the street, this chain of uniquely styled hot dogs is on the rise

BY MIA STAINSBY, VANCOUVER SUN APRIL 23, 2009



The Japadog cart on the corner of Pender Street at Burrard, in front of Scotiabank, joined the original cart at Burrard and Smithe outside Sutton Place recently. They aren't open when it rains.

Photograph by: Glenn Baglo, Vancouver Sun, Vancouver Sun

Considering how much the Japanese like baseball and given that a Japanese guy (Takeru Kobayashi) was the world hot-dog-eating champ for six years in a row until an upset in 2007, the Japanese were destined to take a run at hot dogs -- in their own way.

And that's what you'll find at Japadog, distinguished by the red-hot-dog cart. The first one appeared on Burrard at Smithe a few years ago, just outside Sutton Place Hotel. Come lunch and early dinner, there's always a lineup for these hot dogs, dressed in Japanese garb. Recently, a second cart popped up at Burrard and Pender, on the Scotiabank corner. And from what owner Noriki Tamura says, there will be a sit-down indoor Japadog opening soon in the downtown area, location not quite established. And soon, he'd like Japadogs in the U.S. and Japan.

"I believe I can do it. I want to expand Japadog in the world," he says. "When I was university student, I read the books of Richard Branson of Virgin Group. I thought, seriously, I want to be entrepreneur one day."

Tamura's lowly hot-dog cart has garnered celebrity fans over the years. The quirky take on hot dogs (with flavours of wasabi, teriyaki, miso, seaweed) was featured in oh-so-gonzo Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations*, a travel TV show of adventurous dining.

Gangsta rapper Ice Cube liked Japadog turkey dogs so much, he stopped by 10 times. "Oh, he is very nice person," says Tamura. Being Muslim, Ice Cube couldn't try anything with pork.

The American hot dog, wedded to Japanese condiments, is a hit with locals, too, judging by the clot of people around lunch and early dinner time. The price, of course, is one of the allures. These bruisers will cost anywhere from \$4 to \$6.

Misomayo comes with a turkey sausage, radish sprouts, sesame miso and Japanese mayo; Oroshi is a bratwurst with green onions, grated daikon, teriyaki sauce and nori; Terimayo is a beef dog with seaweed and wasabi mayo. There's a veggie dog for those who prefer. Newer, non-dog items are okonomi, a grilled pancake of Berkshire pork sausage, cabbage, bonito flakes; korokke is like a deep-fried croquette of mashed potato, cabbage and special sauces.

Kobayashi ate 59 hot dogs in 10 minutes at the Coney Island hot-dog-eating world championship, but should think twice before stepping up to Japadog hot dogs. These are no wimpy weenies.

(At the 2007 championship pig-out, Kobayashi and his competitor each ate 59 hot dogs in 10 minutes. His opponent won in overtime by finishing five more hot dogs seven seconds faster than Kobayashi.)

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