

## Two on the Aisle - Club Indigo, Tampopo - June 9th.

By Joe Kirkish

If you've been to just about any metropolitan city in the United States you were bound to find a ramen noodle soup restaurant - many of them, like the Tampopo in Washington Heights, NYC, where the first American ramen shop was born, and where lovers of good Japanese cuisine still fill the place nightly. The name of the restaurant, by the way, is in tribute to Juzo Itami's film of the same name. (Tampopo, by the way, is the Japanese name for "dandelion," and in Itami's film it is the perfect name for the diminutive owner of her noodle shop.)



Across the country are American noodle restaurants catering to lovers of the original Tokyo style menu: ramen soup, usually made with ramen noodles, a savory sauce, chicken and mixed vegetables, varied with unique spices to turn each dish into its own luscious meal.

As in many films, there is the Japanese appreciation of perfection and of the intrinsic connection between food and sex, but not with the same erotic gusto of Itami's movie, and rarely with the comic lustiness of this broad-scale satire which manages to take tongue-in-cheek swipes in more directions than just those regarding food.



Still, there's the subtly comic scene (that has nothing to do with the main plot whatever) in which a group of businessmen order food in a follow-the-leader queue in a fancy restaurant, or the school of manners for young corporate brides being taught to guard against the slightest slurping sound while eating Italian spaghetti.

Slave to tradition is one of the director's favorite elements for satire and it doesn't hold just to food, but rears its comical head in matters dealing with striving endlessly for perfection, but also in dealing with love and sex at the same time.

For those aficionados of Japanese films, the cast is a veritable plum pudding of distinguished names in Japanese films, including Ken Watanabe as our hero's trucking side-kick, frail & elegant Ryutaro Otomo as the Master of Ramen Eating, Shuji Otaki as the Grand Maker of Turtle Soup, and Masahiko Tsugawa as the market manager driven mad by the woman who pinches every piece of food in his grocery store.