Why Did a Japanese Izakaya Charge for a Dish I Didn't Order?

居酒屋的開胃小菜沒點，為什麼帳單有這筆？

What arrived at the table?

桌上這一碟是什麼？



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Look at the timing

At some izakaya, staff bring a small dish when you sit down. It can arrive before you choose anything from the menu.

有些居酒屋會在客人入座時先送一小碟菜。你甚至還沒開始看菜單，它就可能上桌了。

Know the word

The small starter is called otōshi (**お通し**). It is associated with a seating or cover charge, often calculated per person.

這份入座小菜叫「お通し」（otōshi），常與入座費連在一起，店家可能依人頭計費。

Ask about this shop

Portions, ingredients and charges depend on the establishment. Use the staff's explanation for the restaurant you are actually visiting.

小菜的份量、食材與收費會依店家而異。以當天這一家居酒屋的說明為準。

[1] [2]

Ask before you sit

入座前問清楚



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Is there a charge?

Ask “Otōshi wa arimasu ka?” (**お通しはありますか**). This asks whether the restaurant serves an otōshi and opens the conversation about cost.

可先問「お通しはありますか？」意思是「有入座小菜嗎？」接著就能確認店家的計費方式。

How much per person?

Ask “Hitori ikura desu ka?” (**一人いくらですか**). Get the amount per guest, then confirm who in your party it applies to.

「一人いくらですか？」是「一個人多少錢？」確認價格後，也問清楚同行者中哪些人會被計費。

Know your total

For a group, multiply the quoted rate by the number of guests the staff says it covers. Add that amount when comparing restaurant budgets.

多人用餐時，用店家告知的單價乘上適用人數。比較不同店家的預算時，可以把這筆金額一起算進去。

[1] [2]

If ingredients matter

有飲食限制先說



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Speak up early

If you have an allergy or dietary restriction, let staff know as soon as you arrive. The starter may already be prepared.

有過敏或飲食限制，入店時就先告知。店家可能已經把當天的小菜準備好了。

Check the whole dish

Even a vegetable dish may contain fish, meat or stock. Show the specific ingredient in Japanese and ask staff to check the preparation.

看起來是蔬菜的小菜，也可能有魚、肉或高湯。出示你需避開食材的日文，請店員協助確認製法。

Ask what is possible

If the dish is unsuitable, ask about an alternative and whether the charge still applies. Wait for a clear answer before eating.

若這道菜不適合，先確認能否更換，以及費用怎麼算。餐點內容確認符合需求後再食用。

[1] [2]

Read the bill

結帳時看哪一筆



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Find the entry

Look for **お通し** or ask staff to point out the cover charge. A shared bill may show the whole group's amount together.

在帳單找「お通し」，或請店員指出入座費。整桌一起結帳時，可能只看到全桌加總金額。

Check the headcount

Compare the number of charged guests and the quoted per-person amount. If the bill is not itemized, ask how the subtotal was calculated.

核對被計費的人數和原先確認的單價。若店家只提供總額，可以請店員說明小計怎麼算。

Clarify an unfamiliar fee

If two lines look similar, point to both and ask what each covers. Let staff explain whether they are separate charges.

有兩筆費用看起來相似時，把兩項一起指給店員看，請他們說明各自的內容與計費方式。

Try the group calculation

用同桌人數試算

What is it?

確認是不是お通し

Suppose this restaurant quotes ¥400 per charged guest. This figure is an arithmetic example. Use the actual restaurant's quoted price when you visit.

假設這家店告知每人四百日圓。這只是算式示例，實際用餐要換成店家報的價格。

Per person?

確認每位金額

If the restaurant applies this rate to three diners, the cover subtotal is three times ¥400, or ¥1,200 for the table.

如果店家確認這筆費用適用三人，入座費小計就是三乘以四百，整桌一千二百日圓。

Ingredients?

有飲食限制先說

Add the cover subtotal to the separately ordered food and drinks, then check other listed charges before reading the final total.

入座費小計另外加上大家點的餐點和飲料，再核對是否有其他列明費用，最後看整桌總額。

[1] [2]

Three useful questions

現場用得到的三個問題

Guests

以店家說明適用對象為準

Point to the plate and ask “Kore wa otōshi desu ka?” (**これはお通しですか**). Staff can identify whether it is the automatic starter.

指著小碟問「これはお通しですか？」也就是「這是入座小菜嗎？」先把餐點的身分弄清楚。

Rate

用店家告知的每位價格

Ask “Henkō dekimasu ka?” (**変更できますか**). Explain your dietary need and ask separately what happens to the charge if you change the dish.

「変更できますか？」是「可以更換嗎？」說明你的飲食需求，再另外確認更換後的費用怎麼算。

Subtotal

適用人數乘單價

Show the bill and ask staff to explain the number of guests and the unit price. It helps to have the group together.

把帳單給店員看，請他們說明適用人數和每人單價。同桌的人都還在場時，確認起來最方便。

Confirm the cover charge first

先搞懂お通し怎麼收費

A charge per person

確認是否按人計費

Before taking a table, ask whether there is an otoshi charge and whether it applies to each diner.

入座前問清楚有沒有お通し費，以及是否按用餐人數計費。

The dish can vary

小菜內容因店而異

Otoshi can include fish or meat and may be served automatically. Explain any food restrictions before you order.

お通し可能含魚或肉，有些店會直接端上。請在點餐前告知飲食限制。

Check the total as a group

多人用餐，先對一下總額

When comparing two places, include any per-person charge in the group total. Ask about unclear entries before paying.

比較店家時，把每人座位費算進團體總額，結帳前問清楚不明項目。

[3]

REFERENCES

Sources & links

資料來源與原文連結

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Diagrams redrawn for this edition. Scene images are illustrative.
圖解依資料重新編排。內頁影像用於說明情境。