

# Kenmin Foods Co., Ltd.

## < Corporate Profile >

Address	5-1-1 Kaigandori, Chuo-ku, Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture 650-0024
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URL	<a href="https://www.kenmin.co.jp/">https://www.kenmin.co.jp/</a> (In Japanese)
No. of employees	199
Capital	92 million yen
Founding	September 1957
Representative	Yuki Takamura

## < Business Overview >

Manufacture and sale of Befun rice noodles, pho rice noodles, rice pasta, rice paper, frozen food, oolong tea, glass noodles, etc.

Direct management of restaurant business

## < Technology >



Food company with a 70 year business history, continuing to make Befun rice noodles popular around the world

In the 60th year since the release of Kenmin Fried Befun Rice Noodles arranged in a Japanese style

The Chinese characters for Befun rice noodles mean “rice flour,” and as the name implies, their main ingredient is rice. They are said to have originated in southern China, and spread mainly in areas where indica rice is a part of the staple diet, such as Asia. The foundation of Kenmin Foods dates back to 1950, when there were no rice noodles in Japan. However, after World War II, people returning from other Asian countries such as Taiwan missed the taste of the local rice noodles and wished to have them again. In response to such requests, Kenmin Takamura, the founder of our company, started making Befun rice noodles. In his lifetime, Takamura used to say, “rice is the king of the five grains,” and believed that Befun rice noodles would contribute to peoples’ health. Devoted to the production of rice noodles for 70 years, our company now has an around 60% share of the domestic market as the leading company, and is the only Japanese manufacturer of Befun rice noodles. Our main product, Kenmin Fried Befun Rice Noodles, continues to enjoy great popularity even today. The rice noodles are already seasoned and do not need to be boiled to reconstitute them. Adding vegetables, meat, and other ingredients, you can easily cook and enjoy tasty rice noodles with a single frying pan.

### **[History of development]**

At the time of the company’s establishment (in the 1950s), most people in Japan had never had an opportunity to eat Befun rice noodles. Under such circumstances, our founder Takamura thought of making rice noodles that suit the Japanese palate and having them enjoyed also in Japan, and thus set out to develop instant Befun rice noodles. However, he struggled with the pre-seasoning process, especially the drying of the noodles. Instant noodles are dried by oil-frying, but rice noodles cannot be fried because they puff up when fried in oil. After a careful consideration, Takamura devised his own hot air drying method and finally succeeded in drying rice noodles. Thus he realized “non-fried noodles,” which are a low-calorie, healthy instant food, when the product was first developed. The launch of Kenmin Fried Befun Rice Noodles allowed anyone to enjoy authentic stir-fried rice noodles easily, and our business has gradually grown along with the rice noodle market’s expansion.

### **[Originality]**

At present, all our Befun rice noodles are produced at our own Thai factory. From around 1980, import regulations on indica rice, which is essential for making rice noodles, made it difficult for us to purchase rice, the main ingredient of our products. To address the situation, we explored the best rice for making noodles overseas. In 1989, we decided to start the integrated production of rice noodles in Thailand. The rice used by our company is high

quality rice with secured traceability which is cultivated in a water-rich and fertile-soil environment by annual monocropping.

Rice noodle companies in other countries often add starch, etc. for higher production efficiency. However, our 100% Rice Noodles, which have been our specialty for about 70 years, do not contain any salt or food additives. We are the only company in the world that manufactures Befun noodles entirely from rice on such a large production scale. Since they are made only from rice, 100% Rice Noodles are a gluten-free product that can be eaten by those who are allergic to wheat. The product is attracting attention not only in Japan but also around the world.

In addition, Kenmin Fried Befun Rice Noodles are still the only pre-seasoned rice noodles in the world, even 60 years after their introduction (according to our research). We have slightly adjusted the taste over the past 60 years, and have refined the texture and flavor of the noodles to suit customer preferences. However, you can still feel some nostalgia from the unique taste of our product. Recently, since they can be eaten with a lot of vegetables, Kenmin Fried Befun Rice Noodles have become popular as a healthy food, and highly appreciated for that. Annual sales reached a record high in 2018, with about 15 million portions of the rice noodles sold.

### **[Future development]**

Positioning Kenmin Fried Befun Rice Noodles as the “product with which people can most easily enjoy delicious rice noodle dishes in the world,” we launched them in the United States in January 2020, which has a Befun rice noodle market three times as large as the size of the domestic market. This product, KENMIN Yaki Be-fun, launched for overseas sales was developed as an all-gluten-free product, using gluten-free soy sauce. In response to the globally growing demand for gluten-free foods, we will launch it as a “product supporting a gluten-free diet” in Dubai, Europe, Hong Kong, and other countries and regions, following the release in the United States. Our target is to sell, in 2030, 15 million portions of rice noodles, which is equivalent to the current domestic sales.

## < TOPICS >



Rice Pasta was developed and launched on the market.

Rice noodles are eaten in various countries, mainly in Southeast Asia, but they vary in thicknesses and cooking methods. In Japan, rice noodles have also been gaining popularity recently, due to the growing recognition and popularity of gluten-free foods as well as ethnic foods.

We develop rice noodles unique to our company, making use of the technology and know-how cultivated through the production of Befun rice noodles. In 2008, beyond our domain of Befun rice noodle production, we launched Rice Pasta, a brown rice mixed gluten-free food that contains no wheat or food additives, hoping that more people can enjoy rice noodles. The mellow aroma and freshly-made noodle-like texture unique to 100% rice noodles make it perfect for salads as well as pasta dishes.



Kenmin Foods launched a new Rice Paper with gluten-free certification, a first in the industry.

In 2018, Kenmin Foods launched Rice Paper with a gluten-free certification mark, a first in the industry. We are also the only Japanese manufacturer of rice paper. Characteristically, our rice paper is square, which is different from the round shape generally used for fresh spring rolls. We adopted this shape because it is easy for Japanese people, who have a food culture of hand-rolled sushi with dried seaweed, to roll. Owing to this shape, even those making fresh spring rolls for the first time can easily roll up them without failure. Our Rice Paper has been well received by customers for its ease of use.

## < Corporate History >

- Mar. 1950 As Kenmin Shokai, our company starts Befun rice noodle production in Kobe.
- Oct. 1960 Instant stir-fried Befun rice noodles are launched.
- Mar. 1986 Frozen stir-fried Befun rice noodles are launched.
- Dec. 1987 Thai factory is established.
- Mar. 2008 Rice Pasta is launched.
- Mar. 2018 Rice Paper is launched.
- Jan. 2019 Our company enters into official sponsorship agreement with Vissel Kobe, a professional football club in the J1 League.
- May 2019 Production of glass noodles is started at the Thai factory.
- Jan. 2020 KENMIN Yaki Be-fun is launched for overseas markets.