

## A yearlong Yume Wo Katare ticket leads a healthy life

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### Abstract

Yume Wo Katare (YWK) is a ramen shop in Boston. This is not only a ramen shop, but also a dream workshop. After finishing a bowl of ramen, many customers share their dreams in this place and encourage each other. This opportunity motivates people to live in a positive way. The YWK ramen is a Jiro-style ramen and while it is thought to be an unhealthy food, it is unclear how the bowl affects our health. To prove the healthy life with YWK, I constantly ate bowls of ramen by using a yearlong ticket, shared dreams, and monitored my body for one year. I visited YWK 123 times with at least 123 guests in a year. My body indicated that eating one bowl every three days has no effect on physical health. This study also attracted many new customers to visit YWK and promoted a production of dreams. Taken together, my study suggests that the YWK ticket would strengthen mental and physical health by enabling networking, nutrition, dreaming and encouraging others.

### Introduction

Boston is a college city in the USA, and many students come from outside of New England to study here. Boston is ranked #3 best global startup ecosystem in the USA. Most people temporarily come and end up staying in Boston for their future. To study or work in a stressful environment and be successful, it is very important for them to have some dreams for the future. But, at the same time those people have worries as well. To encourage each other, they may need more space to share dreams.

Ramen is a Japanese noodle bowl. It contains wheat noodles, broth and some toppings such as chashu (sliced pork), veggies, egg, etc. Jiro-style is one of the popular Japanese ramen styles, and it comes with chewy thick noodles, rich broth, a layer of bean sprouts, fatty chashu, and minced garlic. Yume Wo Katare (YWK) is one of the famous Jiro-style ramen shops in Boston,

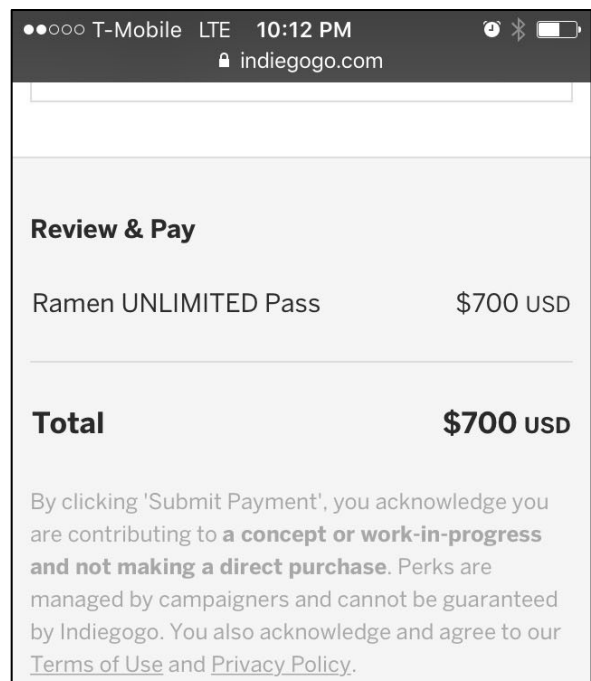
opened in 2012. “YWK” in Japanese has a meaning of “share your dream”. Surprisingly the customers of YWK actually share their dreams after eating their bowl. To share many dreams in YWK, we have to eat a lot of Jiro-style ramen, which is thought to be an unhealthy food. It might be easy to finish the bowl since the ramen tastes so good, but it was previously unclear how the bowls really affect our health over a yearlong period.

Fortunately, I got a yearlong ticket for YWK at a crowd funding of the Japan Festival Boston 2017. The ticket gives me and one guest free ramen any day of the year. In this study, I constantly ate bowls of ramen with different guests to prove the YWK ticket can still allow for a healthy life. I also shared many dreams and monitored my body throughout the year. Here, I show how the yearlong YWK ticket is good for mental as well as physical health.

**Result  
Ticket**

YWK donated a yearlong ticket for the crowd funding of the Japan Festival Boston 2017. I could not get it on the first round. However, since the ticket was sold earlier than expected, and it was an attractive item, Mr. Tsuyoshi Nishioka the owner of YWK decided to donate one more ticket again for the crowd funding. On that day, I visited YWK with my friend, and we discussed whether it was worth it to get the ticket. In 2016, I moved to Boston and became a committee member of the Japan Festival Boston 2017. With just one week remaining before the festival, I felt that I did not contribute well to the organization of the festival. In fact, I really didn't know how I could contribute to the festival. Therefore, I thought the donation was a certain way to support the festival. In addition to my desire to support the festival, my friend suggested that I could successfully complete my cancer research project if I decided to donate. On the way home by bus from YWK, I decided to donate and got the ticket (Figure 1). The value of the donation to the festival is very difficult to explain, but the number of bowls would be one of the objective ways to compare the value. In 2017, the price of one regular bowl was \$12. This price indicated that the ticket value was equivalent to 59 regular bowls of ramen at YWK (Table 1). Since the ticket allows you to invite one guest for free, the face value of

the donation can be paid by visiting around 30 times with a guest. Because the price of the bowl was increased in 2018, the value of the yearlong ticket was spontaneously increased. The official price of a yearlong ticket is currently \$800. These data demonstrate how the donation was valuable for those who love YWK and wish to support the Japan Festival Boston.



**Figure 1. The receipt of the fund raising to the Japan Festival Boston 2017 is shown. The receipt was received from Indiegogo.**

Year	Menu	Price of bowl	Number of bowls per ticket value	
			Ticket at crowd funding (\$700)	Ticket at YWK (\$800)
2017	Regular	\$12	59	67
	Buta	\$14	50	58
2018	Regular	\$13	54	62
	Buta	\$15	47	54

**Table 1. The number of bowls per a yearlong ticket face value.**

## Guest

After the Japan Festival Boston 2017, I visited YWK and started my yearlong ticket. In total, I visited the YWK in Boston 123 times. Since the ticket allowed for one additional free guest, I always invited a guest. I agreed guest to bring his/her friends or families to the meal. For my 100<sup>th</sup> bowl of ramen, I invited 17 people to occupy all of the seats in YWK. For the final day, I invited my colleagues (9 people) to have a lunch together. Eventually, I visited YWK with 192 people and invited 123 people as guests (80 individuals, 50 men and 30 women). The most frequently repeated guest got 23 bowls (13 bowls for free) with me. YWK usually

has a long waiting line of around 15-60 min. Although the chatting during the meal at YWK was very difficult, the waiting time was good for conversation. These experiences helped strengthen our friendship. Since the bowl of ramen was also free for a guest, it was a great opportunity to invite an individual who was not well known each other. I actively invited a person who has never visited YWK, then introduced the place, and removed their fear to visit there. 41 guests (one-third of total guests) visited here for their first time. Taken together, the ticket contributed to my networking as well as the advertising of YWK in Boston.



**Figure 2. I took selfies with guests at YWK.** Selfies were collected from the 3<sup>rd</sup> visit onward. Tiling photo was blurred to protect personal information.



## Ramen

I usually ordered “Regular”, a ramen with 2 slices of chashu, but sometimes ordered “Buta”, a ramen with 5 slices of chashu. It was totally dependent on my physical condition and how many times I had eaten there that week. Even though I ordered “Regular”, the amount of vegetable, firmness of noodles or saltiness of broth was changed every time. It is usually depended on the chef of the day or time of the visit. YWK usually serves only one flavor but these differences made it fun to visit and order from the same menu. “More veggies” option would be preferable as a healthier selection and it

makes a bowl more instagenic. In contrast to the more veggies option, “more fat” option on Buta bowl could be dangerous. It is very tasty, but I had a stomachache later that night. It may help us to lose our weight acutely, so we call this a “Yumekata diet”. YWK also has an “Extra” option with \$1, and you can get extra noodles with another bowl. They also have popup menu, including Gekikara ramen, Curry ramen, Tsukemen, Okinawa-soba, etc. These differences in chefs or menu variety made it possible to visit 3 times a week without getting sick of eating YWK bowls.



**Figure 3. Bowls at YWK and YGA are shown.** 120 photos of bowls at YWK and YGA were taken. This figure indicates the diversity of bowls in every single meal. One photo is duplicated and randomly placed as an internal control (also see the materials and method section).

## Place

YWK in Boston is located at Porter area (Figure 4). It is very close to the Porter SQ Red line station. I usually biked from the Longwood Medical Area, where I work and live. It takes 25 min. In winter, I used bus and train option. The #47 bus from Longwood Medical Area to Central SQ takes 20-40 min. M2 shuttle bus from in front of Harvard medical school to Harvard University is also available. In both cases, I used a Red line from Central SQ. Red line from Central SQ to Porter SQ takes 10 min. If it is nice weather, bike is better not only for time but also for the exercise. The place has no roof over the waiting line, so we needed an umbrella for rainy days. Even in a rain or snow, we have to stay outside to wait in line. Waiting time would be 15-60 min. If you are impatient, I recommend visiting here either before 6:30 pm or after 9:00 pm for dinner (open 5:00 pm – 10:00 pm, Tue - Sat).

**Figure 4. The Outside of YWK.**



## Order System

Since YWK in Boston has three lanes of table for 18 people (6 people per lane), the staff allows 6 customers to go inside the shop together from a waiting line. If you take a big party to this place, you may have to wait more than usual. The staff prefers to make exact 6

people as a group. So, you may be able to skip the big group by waiting alone. I usually invited only one guest for a dinner, and it did not seem to have any effect on the waiting time. The ticket does not allow you to skip the waiting line. You need wait even if it is a rainy or stormy day. The place allows cash only. But it is no problem for ticket holder. Only one thing you have to do at the register is to show your yearlong ticket. You can order whatever you want, which is one of the best benefits of having this ticket.

## Judge

YWK has a unique system to judge your skill to achieve your dream. When you finish a bowl, YWK staff evaluates your bowl and screams either “Perfect (nothing in the bowl)”, “Good job (only broth in the bowl)”, “Almost (still there are some left over)” or “Next time (full in the bowl)”. For YWK staffs, your skill to focus on your bowl has the same meaning as your skill to focus on your dream. I got 1 perfect, 121 good job, and 2 almost in this year (Since I ate 2 bowls in one day, and one was good job but the other was almost).

## Way to Share Dreams

After your order and payment, a staff asks customers whether to share their dreams or not. If you say “YES”, you will get a flag to represent your willingness to share your dreams (Figure 5). When you finish your bowl, a staff asks you to share your dreams. The first time I visited this place, I did not share my dream at all. Through the experiences over this past year, I am now used to it. Now I’ve understood that the dream is not required to be an “American Dream”, which is usually too difficult to achieve. Even a very small or short-term dream, like “get up early in the morning”, is good enough in this place. Once a person achieves it, he/she will have new dreams.



And then after repeating dream updating at this place, some of them will find a big dream that would be very difficult to dream on a first visit. It can spontaneously occur in this place. To promote this positive feedback loop, YWK in Boston has an interesting program called “Positive cycle”. The customer can pay a tip. All of tips are changed to key chains for a free bowl of ramen. If a customer gets a “Good job” or “Perfect” and then permits to share his/her dream on the YWK SNS accounts, the customer will get a key chain for a free bowl for the next visit. The customer can repeat this process to get a bowl for free forever with this program. By using this system, many customers autonomously produce their dreams at this place. In this system, a dreamer can eat a bowl for free, and people can support the dreamers. The concept to share dreams makes YWK a unique place in Boston as well as all over the world.

### Staff

The staff are super friendly. Many of them are working as volunteers. It is incredible. They also enjoyed our visiting and served a special bowl to my guest or me. Without them, I would not have visited there so many times. They also have many dreams to share. I really appreciated when they shared their dreams. Their performance encourages customers who visit here for the first time. I know that not all customers choose to share dreams and it would be painful for them to hear any words of decline from customer. Even I did not share dreams every time. But their routine service definitely encouraged me to think again and again about my big dream that I already shared. Therefore, they were very important for my mental health.

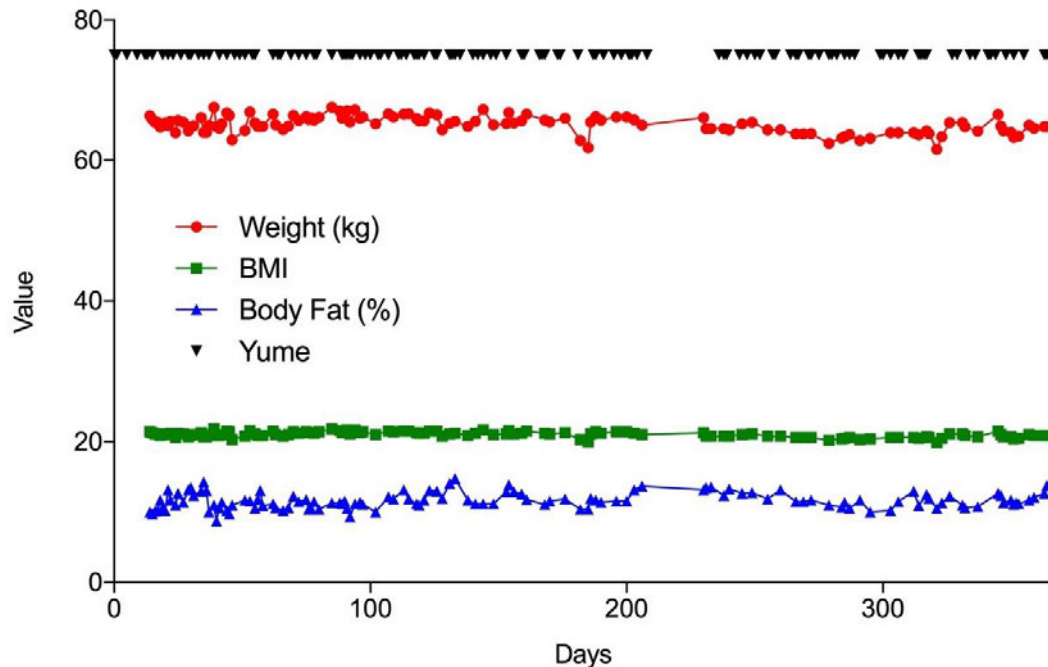


Figure5. A representative YWK flag to share your dream is shown.

## Body weight

YWK serves only one flavor of bowl and it is the Jiro-style ramen that has rich fatty broth. Since it is a huge bowl, people usually do not want to eat it every day. To promote the positive cycle, it would be better to know how many bowls of ramen in a year we can eat without affecting our body weight. I visited 123 times and I ate a bowl once every three days. To evaluate the effect on my body, I monitored my body weight throughout the year by using a body fat scale. The scale also showed body fat and BMI. In total, I took measurements 127 times over the course of

the year (Figure 6). In the 1<sup>st</sup> week of the period, values for my body weight, body fat, and BMI were 65.45 kg, 10.36 % and 21.13, respectively (Table 2). These values were shown as standardized levels for my body type (38 old age, 176 cm height). The last week of the ticket, the values were 64.22 kg, 11.99 % and 20.73. The means and standard deviations of these items also indicated the stability of these values in this period (Table 2). These results demonstrated that the bowl would not affect physical health by eating one bowl every three days.



**Figure 6. Values from a body fat scale and intake times of YWK bowl are shown. ▼ indicates the day which I had a bowl at YWK. Red, Blue and Green lines show the weight, body fat and BMI, respectively (n=1).**

			Weight (kg)	Body Fat (%)	BMI
Weeklong	1st	Mean	65.45	10.36	21.13
	Last	Mean	64.22	11.99	20.73
Yearlong	Mean		65.13	11.65	21.02
	Std. Deviation		1.19	1.14	0.38

**Table 2. Weeklong and yearlong values from body weight scaling are shown.**

## Discussion

Food intake is a fundamental life event and very important for nutrition as well as communication. Cooking at home is one of the good ways to save money and time, but it makes it difficult to do active networking. Although eating-out is good for networking, it is difficult to estimate the amount of payment and usually we have to pay a lot of money to have dinner with people who we are not close with. YWK has only 2 choices of bowls and a yearlong ticket allows you to invite one guest for free. Only 27 visits (and order two bowls of \$15 BUTA) are enough to get the same value of the original price of the YWK ticket. In this year, we ate at least 246 bowls with friends by using my ticket and the value is over \$3,000. It indicates how the ticket is valuable for people who like to eat dinner with others.

Eating a well-balanced diet may help us with weight loss. It might be true that the exercise is an important factor for effective weight loss. But it is unclear how my exercise helps for my body weight maintenance because I did not do much exercise in the last winter season. I enforced myself to run or bike to maintain my body weight in the last summer. Interestingly, it helped me to go out from home and reduced the stress from staying at work. Therefore YWK-associated exercise might have a positive effect on mental rather than physical health.

Unexpectedly, my body fat slightly increased after finishing the yearlong ticket (Table 2 and 3). It might be associated with

the increasing of food intake at breakfast and lunch. After a YWK bowl at dinner, I did not eat a lot of breakfast and lunch on the next day. Therefore, I hypothesize that it might be help to maintain the balance of body weight. There are more than 150 breweries in Massachusetts, which makes it easier to drink different style tasty beers at or after dinner (1). But YWK absolutely prevented drinking by serving a huge bowl. These results in my study supported the idea that the continuous eating at YWK is healthier than originally thought. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to repeat this experiment by myself. We also have to consider an individual difference on metabolism, genetic background, intestinal flora, and so on. We may need to repeat the analyses together with multiple YWK lovers by 2030.

YWK in Boston will end in 2030. It is written on the name-board. It reminds me the importance to keep in mind a deadline of a project. It must be very important to set a schedule to achieve something. By using the yearlong YWK ticket, I aimed to invite many people and enjoy the chatting. Even in the evolutions of the Internet technologies, there are many benefits of face-to-face communication (2). This networking experience and the memory in this year would provide an endless positive mind to me. Finally, this study demonstrated that the YWK ticket is the best way for saving money, nutrition, and networking. This is likely true for other YWK lovers. I wish all the people having the ticket enjoy making a positive cycle in their life.

		Weight (kg)	Body Fat (%)	BMI
3 weeks after	Mean	65.05	12.64	21.02
the expiration	Std. Deviation	0.80	0.79	0.25

**Table 3. Body weight in 3 weeks after the YWK ticket expiration are shown.**



## **Materials & Methods**

### **Inviting guests**

Guests are randomly assigned and invited to YWK. I invited a guest by face-to-face, SNS, or on-site. The scheduling was performed before 1-2 weeks of the event day. The people who leave the Boston area were preferentially invited.

### **Commuting**

I used a share bike, Hubway (it was changing its name to Blue Bikes), for 3 months until the expiration of a yearlong key. Hubway was usually used from the Harvard SQ to the Porter SQ. After the expiration, I changed to ride a road bike that I got from my friend. I used it from the Longwood medical area to Porter SQ, except for rainy day, windy day and winter season. I also used both Bus and train. CharlieCard was used for both Bus and Subway (MBTA). Harvard ID was used for M2 Cambridge-HMS shuttle (MASCO). Uber was also used to save travel time.

### **Eating**

Ramens were ordered according to the instruction. I ate them by using Tenchi-gaeshi. First I ate Cha-shu, and then enjoyed the noodle and veggies. I did not taste broth after when I finish the noodle. I drank water only after eating the ramen to save the stomach space.

### **Photo**

Photos of ramen and Selfies were taken before eating. These were taken by iPhone SE (Apple). JPEG files were imported to MacBook Pro (Apple). Tiling photos were created by using the Collagelt 3 Free software for Mac (Version 3.6.2., PearlMountain). Adobe Photoshop (Adobe) was used to blur the tiling photo of selfies. For the internal control in ramen photos, the photo taken on Jan 3, 2018 was used.

### **Weighing**

Body weight, body fat and BMI were measured by using the Yolanda body fat scale (YOL16070501HK, Yolanda). Data were transferred to iPhone SE (Apple) via Bluetooth technology with the Yolanda app. Data was managed with Microsoft Excel for Mac (Microsoft) and a graph was created with Prism 6 (Prism).

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Reference**

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