

# Sweet Bean

Cert PG Japan 2015 113 mins

## Crew

Director/ Screenplay Naomi Kawase  
 Cinematography Shigeki Akiyama  
 Film Editing Tina Baz  
 Original music David Hadjadj

## Cast

Kirin Kiki Tokue  
 Masatoshi Nagase Sentarô  
 Kyara Uchida Wakana  
 Miyoko Asada Shop Owner  
 Etsuko Ichihara Yoshiko

## Synopsis

Tokyo, the present. Sentaro, a baker, runs a small dorayaki (pancake) shop. He's lonely, in debt, and struggling to make a living. When 76-year-old Tokue responds to his advertisement for an assistant, cheerfully agreeing to work for minimal pay, Sentaro is sceptical about taking her on - until she gives him a taste of her perfect sweet bean paste, which make his pancakes irresistible. Word spreads, and the business begins to thrive.

But then rumours start circulating about a dark secret in Tokue's past, and Sentaro decides he will have to let her go...



## Booking Information

**Distributor:** Eureka Entertainment

**DVD bookings:**

**CINEMA for ALL Booking Scheme**

see page 8 for more information

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[www.cinemaforall.org.uk](http://www.cinemaforall.org.uk)

**Available:** Now



## Reviews

Cinema's relationship with the subject of food is a complex one which is loaded with symbolism, much of it sexual. Food in film commonly serves as a connection between people (as in *I Am Love*, *The Lunchbox* and numerous others). Here, however, food is a bridge to the traditions of the past. As such, Naomi Kawase's subtle study of the relationship between an ailing elderly woman Tokue (veteran actress Kirin Kiki) and Sentarô (Masatoshi Nagase), a pancake vendor who grudgingly employs her, reminded me a little of Abdellatif Kechiche's family drama *Couscous*.

The deceptive simplicity of this intimate, handsomely photographed picture parts like curtains to reveal something a little more knotty. What at first seems to be a reaction against the acceleration of contemporary culture - Tokue sweats long, painstaking hours every morning coaxing unforgiving aduki beans into the sweet bean paste which becomes a local sensation - later serves as a window on to a less palatable element of Japan's past.

There are moments when the generally excellent Kirin Kiki slightly overdoes the adorable granny shtick. But for the most part, the quality of the dignified, understated performances here prevents the picture from tipping into cloying sentimentality.

*Wendy Ide, The Observer, August 2016*

Adapted from a novel by Durian Sukegawa, this is Naomi Kawase's most accessible film to date, the touching tale of an old woman who transforms the fortunes of a street vendor of "dorayaki" (small pancakes filled with sweet bean paste). But beneath that lies a complex study of Japanese culture, revealing attitudes to social stigma and where chauvinism stifles compassion. ....

Kawase has a fascination with humanity's relationship to nature, reflected in imagery that initially lingers on cherry blossom and bubbling ingredients. But the pace and the colour palate change as the focus shifts to social critique over human drama. Nevertheless, this delicately played picture remains poignant and astute.

*David Parkinson, Radio Times, August 2016*

## FILM FACTS...

- ☆ The film premiered at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, in 2015, where it was nominated for the *Un certain regard* Award.
- ☆ Veteran actor Kirin Kiki began her career in the 1960's, and was well known for playing eccentric comedy roles. Her recent film appearances include *Still Walking*, *I Wish*, and *Our Little Sister*.
- ☆ Kyara Uchida, who plays Wakana, is Kirin Kiki's real-life granddaughter.