



The Delight of Japanese Food



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Tradition

Japanese cuisine was born out of *ichijū-issai*, the eating of rice with a bowl of soup and a side dish. Embodying the Japanese spirit of frugality, this simple dietary style was adopted throughout the nation centuries ago, and has come to epitomize the essence of Japanese cuisine—the preparation of seasonal foods in a simple manner that makes the most of their natural flavors and lets nothing go to waste.

伝統

Japanese cuisine, captivating the world with healthful, tasty food

Four reasons for Japanese cuisine's appeal



The concept of *ichijū-issai* formed the basis for *shōjin* cuisine, the vegetarian diet taken up by Buddhist monks around the 13th century. Eschewing seafood and meat, this regimen comprises mainly grains, beans, vegetables, seaweed, and nuts. Today, ascetic monks continue to eat this diet, which also incorporates the “waste not, want not” spirit of Japanese cuisine. *Kaiseki* cuisine evolved from *shōjin* cuisine as a meal of rice, soup, and three other dishes that was originally consumed at tea ceremonies before the serving of tea. Now it is popular with the general public as a lavish dining style in which participants can enjoy elegant presentation of food and tableware without being fettered by etiquette. As a fusion of selected seasonal ingredients, sophisticated cooking techniques, elaborate dishes, and graceful hospitality, *kaiseki* cuisine has been raised to a world-class art form that exemplifies Japan's gastronomic culture. These culinary techniques, styles of eating, and attitudes toward food are the foundation of modern Japanese cuisine.

Seasons

Japan has four distinct seasons, each of which offers its own variety of seafood, vegetables, and fruits at the peak of their flavor, referred to as *shun* in Japanese. Food in season not only offers a more pleasant taste sensation, but also has higher nutritional value. Whether it be an everyday meal or *kaiseki* cuisine, the fundamental principle of Japanese cuisine is to capitalize on food of the season. This approach has allowed Japanese to relish delectable flavors and the enchanting changes of the seasons throughout the year.

旬

美

Beauty

Appearance is a key element of Japanese cuisine. This can be seen in the many slicing methods that have been created for vegetables and *sashimi*—the attractiveness and taste of food can be dramatically altered simply by the way it is sliced. Japanese cuisine takes spatial beauty to new heights, placing emphasis on the three-dimensional form, color patterns, and other visual aspects of food arrangement. Moreover, tableware is carefully selected so that its character, color, and shape are in harmony with the food and the season. Delighting the eyes as much as the taste buds, Japanese cuisine is truly an art.

健康

Health

What really sets Japanese cuisine apart is that it heavily relies on such foods as grains, vegetables, and fish, while limiting the use of cooking oil. Moreover, food is prepared in a simple style that gets the most out of the natural flavors. Since Japanese cuisine offers a nutritionally balanced diet that is rich in vegetable fat, protein, and fiber, but low in calories and animal fat, it has become the focus of global attention as a healthful eating style.



Ichijū-issai



This is a simple meal of rice, pickles, soup, and a fish or vegetable dish. In an age of increasingly extravagant eating habits, this down-to-earth but nutritionally balanced dietary style is attracting attention for its wholesomeness.

Shōjin cuisine

Originally created as a diet for Buddhist monks, *shōjin* cuisine does not use seafood or meat. Today, it has evolved into a style in which seasonal vegetables and other ingredients are served in beautiful arrangements, and it is being rediscovered as a healthful way to eat.



Kaiseki cuisine

Although this cuisine has changed shape over the years, its basic composition remains the same—rice, soup, *sashimi* or other appetizer, a simmered dish, and broiled fish. It is noted for its beauty, as seasonal ingredients are sliced and arranged using refined techniques, and tableware is rigorously selected to enhance the presentation. Available at specialty restaurants, modern *kaiseki* cuisine is enjoyed as a sumptuous meal eaten on festive occasions.



Seasonal dishes



Seasonal cuisine includes hot pot dishes eaten in winter. Bounded by the ocean and covered with mountains, Japan is endowed with delectable food from both sea and land, so each region boasts of its own special hot pot dish made from local delicacies. The sight of many people surrounding a big pot and savoring its contents on a frosty day is a hallmark of life in Japan.