FRUIT

Handcrafted gems with
eye-catching shapes and colors

Spring, summer, autumn, and winter in Japan each produce different types of fruit, meaning that all sorts of wonderful taste sensations can be experienced throughout the year. By savoring the natural flavor of fresh fruit each season, Japanese partake of the pleasures afforded by the passing of the seasons. Improvements continue to be made to cultivation techniques, producing a steady stream of enhancements to flavor, shape, and color. No effort is spared to raise quality, with some growers taking the time to cover fruit on trees with protective bags. As such, Japan’s beautiful, high-quality fruit can be thought of as handcrafted gems. Native species include persimmons and Japanese pears, and peaches are old-timers as well, as evidenced by their appearance in the eighth century Kojiki, the oldest chronicle of Japanese history.

Spring

Strawberries
Treasure houses of vitamin C that enhance health and beauty
Rich in vitamin C, Japan’s fragrant, strongly sweet strawberries are very popular and enjoyed both raw and in such processed forms as jam and jelly.

Watermelons
Tasty, chilled fruit that beats the summer heat
Sweet, succulent watermelons are synonymous with summer in Japan, and are especially tasty when chilled. Offering a distinctive taste sensation with their invigorating freshness, watermelons also have a strong diuretic effect, making them good for people concerned about swelling, kidney trouble, or high blood pressure.

Summer

Cherries
Lovely orbs with delicate flavor
Cast in a luminous, beautiful hue, Japanese cherries offer a refined, undeniably sweet and an abundance of minerals. High-grade varieties are carefully packed one by one in boxes that make wonderful gifts.

Peaches
Juicy, luscious fruit best enjoyed raw
Popular as gifts because of their clarity and beauty, Japanese peaches are noted for their soft, juicy flesh, and intense sweetness and fragrance. Peaches are a good source of fiber.

Japanese pears
Unparalleled juiciness
Compared with European pears, which are often used in processed form, Japanese pears are very succulent, making them very delicious when eaten raw. They also offer a pleasant, distinctive crispness, and are rich in fiber.

Melons
The sweetness-packed king of fruit
Considered by many to be the superlative fruit, melons are a big item in Japan, pleasing the senses with their mouth-watering sweetness and elegant aroma. Chilling increases the sweetness, enhancing the flavor.

Autumn

Grapes
A delightful assortment of flavors and fragrances
What makes Japanese grapes special is that many varieties are grown, allowing all sorts of flavors and fragrances to be experienced. The polyphenols in grapes are believed to combat lifestyle-related illnesses and slow down aging of the skin.

Apples
A wholesome treat that’s especially tasty when eaten whole
Japan’s apples come in abundant varieties that provide a continuum of flavors from powerfully sweet to crispy tart, and their eye-catching shapes and colors have earned acclaim from around the world. In addition to aiding digestion, apples hold a rich supply of nutrients that makes them good for staying healthy and relieving fatigue.

Winter

Tangerines
Sweet symbols of winter in Japan
Easily peeled and devoid of seeds, tangerines make for a quick, wholesome snack that is exceedingly sweet. Tangerines are always found on Japanese tables in winter partly because of their copious vitamin C, which helps ward off colds.
SEAFOOD

The starting point of Japanese cuisine

As inhabitants of a long island chain, Japanese have made fish and shellfish a key part of their diet from time immemorial, building up a distinctive culture of seafood over the centuries. Today, many different methods are used to prepare the diverse bounty of fish that each season brings, allowing a spectrum of flavors to be enjoyed throughout the year. This frequent consumption of seafood is also believed to be one of the secrets behind Japanese longevity, and the world is now turning its attention to seafood as a low-fat, low-calorie diet offering abundant nutrients that can help prevent lifestyle-related diseases.

Different ways to make a tasty seafood meal

Sashimi
Fresh, raw seafood sliced thin and served with such seasonings as soy sauce mixed with wasabi or ginger, sashimi originated as a simple meal for fishermen while out at sea. Along with the spread of soy sauce, sashimi evolved into a lavish dish also enjoyed at home. Satisfying both the palate and the eyes, sashimi is recognized around the world as a classic example of Japanese cuisine.

Examples of fish good for sashimi
- Tuna, sea bream, bonito, hamachi, yellowtail, sardine, horse mackerel

Typical method of preparing sashimi
Wild horse mackerel sashimi

1. Scale and gut the fish, and remove the head. Spread open the body to cut out the central bone, and extract the small bones with a bone picker.

2. Sprinkle salt on the fish and let it sit for a moment. Rinse it with water and then dip the entire body in vinegar water. After picking the skin by hand and making decorative impressions across the fish, cut the fish into small slices.

3. Arrange the slices on a plate and garnish with grated ginger, decorative leaves, etc.

Grilling
Fish grilled over an open flame is another common feature of Japanese cuisine, representing a broad spectrum ranging from homestyle dishes to masterpieces created at posh restaurants. Before grilling, fish is seasoned in various ways, such as sprinkling salt on it, coating it with a soy sauce-based dressing, or marinating it in miso.

Examples of fish good for grilling
- Red sea bream, pufferfish, mackerel, horse mackerel, sardine, saury

Typical method of grilling
Grilled salted salmon

1. Sprinkle salt on slices of salmon and let them sit for a while.

2. Grill both sides of the slices over an open flame.

3. Arrange them on a plate and garnish with slices of lemon or lime.

Sea delicacies other than fish

Abalone
One of the sea’s finest delicacies, abalone are univalves that have a saucer-shaped shell. Offering a distinctly firm texture, abalone are served raw in sashimi and sashimi, steamed in sake, grilled whole, and prepared in other ways.

Sharkfin
The tail and dorsal fins of large sharks are dried for use as a luxury ingredient for dishes. After preparation and simmering, sharkfin becomes a pleasantly soft, gelatinous substance. Japan is one of the world’s top producers of sharkfin.

Scallops
Featuring a large adductor muscle, these bivalves have thick, flavorful flesh that is sliced into sashimi, fried in butter, stewed with other ingredients, and used in soups.

Roasted laver
A very familiar part of the Japanese diet, these thin sheets of dried seaweed are used in different ways, such as to wrap sushi rolls, rice balls, or roasted rice cakes.

Tidbits

Dried seafood
Seafood can be preserved by slicing it open and drying it in the sun, which causes a tough membrane to form over the surface. Exposure to the sun and mineral laden sea breezes create a tinner flesh and a condensed savorness not found in other forms of processing. This practice is truly the embodiment of the wisdom and skill that grew out of the Japanese people’s intense fondness for fish.