Savor the freshness of each grain in every bite

Secrets behind delicious Japanese rice: climate, people and technology.

High quality rice is grown throughout Japan.

Rice is a crop that is essential to the Japanese people. Rice-growing began in Japan about 2500 years ago. Japan is located in a temperate zone, blessed with quality water and sunshine and four distinct seasons: all favorable conditions for rice cultivation. The technology to make the most of this environment has progressed thanks to human effort. Presently, all over Japan, rice plants in paddies are neatly planted at equal intervals. Such views form part of the distinctive beauty of the rural Japanese landscape.

Strict quality control.

For rice growing, farmers have developed cultivation methods that take advantage of Japan’s rich natural conditions. At the same time, by using weather information and technology such as selective breeding, they have also acquired production techniques that are not easily influenced by external factors. Harvested rice is threshed and kept in cool storage warehouses below 15°C (59°F). Then, it is shipped in small quantities to meet consumers’ needs. Thus, people can always expect fresh rice to be available in stores.

More than 300 varieties create a wealth of choice.

Japan cultivates an incredible number of rice varieties. National research centers and prefectural experimental stations are producing rice with varying taste by assisting in the development of varieties that suit regional climate, soil and usage. Some varieties are resistant to disease, pests and weather, and others differ in taste, fragrance and texture.

Fluffy cooked rice is a meal on its own. Naturally, it also complements various cuisines.

The rice harvested in Japan is nearly all Japonica rice, which features a natural sweetness, mild fragrance and plump moistness. Being simple and mild, it makes a tasty food on its own and also complements a variety of side dishes. Rice plays a pivotal role in a healthy Japanese diet. Its major constituent is the carbohydrate, but it also contains a good balance of protein, iron, vitamins such as B1 and E, and dietary fiber.

Top Five Types of Japanese Rice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Rice Type</th>
<th>Harvest Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Koshihikari</td>
<td>2168 tons/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hitomebore</td>
<td>857 tons/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hinohikari</td>
<td>838 tons/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Akita Koshi</td>
<td>751 tons/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Norinuki</td>
<td>298 tons/year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments by Toyozawa Norihiro, Rice Retail Shop "Suzukoiu"

Rice fields in the countryside.

In a cool storage warehouse, temperature can be maintained at below 15°C (59°F), even in the summer.

"Rice is the source of long life and health!"

The basic Japanese meal consisting of rice combined with vegetables, soybeans and fish makes Japan a world leader in life expectancy.

Yujiro Yamori (Director and Professor, Mikogawa Women’s University Institute for World Health Development, Japan and Emi2ino Professor, Kyoto University, Japan)
Seafood

A plentiful source of culinary delight

This gift from the sea is prepared in diverse ways to capture freshness.

Japan’s climate and seasons give us a wide variety of delicious fish.

Japan is surrounded by the sea, and the custom of eating fish dates back over 3000 years. Its north-south oriented landmass and its intricate coastline have produced a variety of fish in each region. The rivers that flow through its abundant forests to the sea carry rich nutrients and have nurtured diverse marine products. Fish in season are particularly tasty. For example, spring red sea bream, autumn Pacific saury and winter yellowtail are highly prized in Japanese cuisine.

Riding the sea currents, fish have sustained the nation’s health.

Warm and cold currents flow around the Japanese archipelago and run into each other along its coast. These locations produce large volumes of plankton, which make them rich fishing grounds by gathering migratory fish. The fish that migrate though these grounds mainly consist of Pacific saury, mackerel, jack mackerel and sardines. These fish species are frequently eaten in Japan, and research has revealed that the nutrients contained in these fish contribute to the long life and good health enjoyed by the Japanese people.

Careful handling techniques allow us to enjoy goodness fresh from the sea.

Japan uses various innovative methods to transport fresh fish. For example, in some cases, coastal catch is carried to port alive in the fishing net under water. Other techniques include keeping the fish alive in a tank and having them move around without being fed, which firms the flesh before processing. Japanese people constantly pursue ways of preparing fish that make it fresher and more delicious to eat.

“The joy of savoring seasonal fish”

In Japan, people can savor a wealth of fish varieties in season with optimal fat content. This is the ultimate luxury.

Alan Wong
(Chef and Owner, Alan Wong’s Restaurant, Hawaii/Japan)