

# The Food of Japan

Culinary Delights for the Body and Soul



## Japanese food that satisfies your body and soul

Food is the basic component that supports our daily activities. Apart from satisfying our appetites, food also makes us healthy and gives us peace of mind to enjoy life. Why not try some Japanese ingredients that are not only delicious but that satisfy both your body and soul?

### ■ Good nutrition balance for building a healthy body

Japan has four distinct seasons, and each has its own “*shun*,” or seasonal, food. *Shun* refers to peak ripeness. Foods are most delicious when they are in season and are highest in nutrients. The staple of Japanese cuisine is rice, which is naturally low in fat. Vegetables play a central role, little oil is used and a variety of food preparation methods such as simmering, steaming and fermenting are used to extract the delicious taste and nutritional elements of ingredients.

### ■ Food safety

The supply of safe food is essential. In line with an international framework, Japan has taken a science-based approach to ensure food safety from farm to table. For example, the government is promoting the implementation of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system.

### ■ Joy of savoring a wide variety

Japan’s north-south orientation and its varied landscape have produced a huge diversity of foods. Crop production has focused on improving quality through means such as selective breeding and technological development. Know-how has also been applied to the use of a variety of nature’s goodness as food ingredients. Many Japanese ingredients have a full yet delicate flavor that can be enjoyed even when cooked using non-Japanese cooking methods.

*BENTO*, a meal served in a box,  
is a microcosm of Japanese food culture.



“*Shokado Bento*” is a *bento* box divided into four square sections.  
Rice and side dishes including seafood, meat and vegetables are attractively presented in this box.  
This cuisine uses seasonal foods based on *kaiseki* cuisine, a highly stylized multi-course  
cuisine that traditionally formed part of the tea ceremony.





Let us tell you about the appeal of Japanese food.





# 米 Rice

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 B<sub>1</sub> and E, and dietary fiber.



#### Top Five Types of Japanese Rice in Order of Harvest Volume (2007)

1	<i>Koshihikari</i>	3148 tons / year	Has a balance of stickiness, softness, delicious taste, appearance, fragrance.
2	<i>Hitomebore</i>	857 tons / year	Soft with a sweetness that expands in the mouth. A variety compatible with Japanese cuisine.
3	<i>Hinohikari</i>	839 tons / year	An all-round variety compatible with Western and Chinese cuisines. Doesn't harden after cooling.
4	<i>Akitakomochi</i>	751 tons / year	Sweet but not very sticky. Suitable for mixing with other grains and for sushi.
5	<i>Haenuki</i>	290 tons / year	Characterized by firmness. Resilience can be enjoyed in onigiri and donburi dishes.

Source: Statistics compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, 2008 / Comments by Toyozou Nishijima, Rice Retail Shop "Suzunobu"



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.

Yukio Yamori (Director and Professor, Mukogawa Women's University Institute for World Health Development, Japan and Emeritus Professor, Kyoto University, Japan)



# 水産物 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.

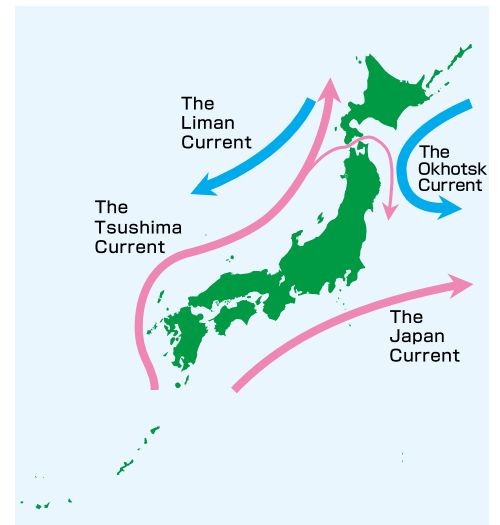
**Riding the sea currents, fish have sustained the nation's health.**

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 through 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.



With four currents flowing very close to the Japanese archipelago, its waters are a rich source of fish.



“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)





# 野菜 Vegetables

Quality derived  
from nature's vitality



## Humans and nature collaborate to create delicious delights.

Numerous varieties are grown, reflecting Japan's seasons and climate.

Japan's natural environment is rich in regional and seasonal changes. Taking advantage of these changes, producers have developed a wide variety of vegetables. Japanese vegetables are succulent with unique tastes. For example, the Japanese *daikon* radish contains much water and once simmered possesses a subtle depth of flavor. Japanese cuisine has developed by making the most of the various natural flavors of such ingredients.

## High quality makes it possible to eat vegetables raw.

Producers have continued their efforts to produce high quality vegetables through selective breeding and the application of farming methods. Eating vegetables raw has thus become a common practice in Japan, and vegetables like lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage and shallots are firm favorites eaten raw in salads at home. In recent times, their distinctive taste and attractiveness has led to an increasing number of French and Italian chefs who use Japan-grown vegetables.

## Appropriate controls and methods deliver savory vegetables.

The use of agricultural chemicals must meet GAP, which was established by the government. Accordingly, agricultural produce must meet Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) contained in what is called the "Positive List." In Japan, there is a domestic transportation system that uses temperature control to maintain

freshness during distribution. The same know-how is also used when exporting to neighboring countries. Vegetables are packed neatly in boxes with matching sizes to prevent damage during transportation. Other types of GAP are also being adopted throughout Japan's vegetable growing regions as a system that efficiently manages the production process in consideration of food safety and environmental friendliness.



Vegetable producing regions are creating beautifully shaped vegetables that can even be enjoyed raw.



Simmered Japanese *daikon* radish.



“The texture of Japanese vegetables is phenomenal.”

I was completely surprised at the wonderful texture of Japanese vegetables. For me, Japanese cuisine, which maximizes the natural flavor of vegetables, is the ultimate in freshness.

William Ledeuil  
(Chef and Owner, ze kitchen galerie, Paris)



和牛

# Wagyu, Japanese Beef

Luxurious flavor developed with superb skill

## Flavor lovingly nurtured from farm to table.

### Technique and care that produce undeniable quality.

Superb *wagyu* Japanese beef comes from the special technique and the attentive care given by the producers. The term “*wagyu* beef cattle” refers to distinctive Japanese breeds. *Wagyu* beef cattle are raised to be healthy animals in well-ventilated barns spread with sawdust. They are fed with a mixture of hay and highly nutritious, safe compound feeds. Farmers who breed *wagyu* cattle raise them with careful attention to detail as if they were their own children, keeping a close eye on everything, including their physical condition.

### A smooth, marbled pattern: the hallmark of flavor and quality.

A feature of *wagyu* beef is melt-in-the-mouth texture and a rich, luxurious taste derived from an abundance of fat. The beautiful pattern of fat through red flesh like the chuck, rib, and sirloin is termed *shimofuri*, or marbling. Its flavor will de-

light you when used in various types of cuisine. *Wagyu* beef is sold after inspection and grading for attributes such as meat color, texture and marbling. The “*Wagyu Mark*”<sup>\*</sup> is attached exclusively to authentic domestic Japanese beef to distinguish such *wagyu* beef quality. This mark acts as a guide when selecting delicious, high-quality, authentic *wagyu* beef.

<sup>\*</sup>For more information on the “*Wagyu Mark*,” please visit the following URL:  
<http://www.maff.go.jp/e/export/wagyu/>

### Exacting controls to deliver safe *wagyu* beef.

Japan implements extremely strict hygiene control over beef. With the outbreak of BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), it began BSE testing and removal of SRM (Specified Risk Material) for all cattle in Japan, which is one of the strictest standards in the world. All domestic cattle are also registered in a database at birth with an individual identification number. With the number on domestically produced beef sold in stores, the movement of cattle, including breed and birth date, can be found on the Internet.



“The best balance of *umami* and tenderness”



Wherever you search in the world, you will never find a beef like *wagyu*, so perfectly balanced in every respect.

Thierry Voisin  
(Chef, Les Saisons, Imperial Hotel, Tokyo)



The term *wagyu* means Japanese beef cattle, referring to purebreds of four unique breeds: (1) Japanese Black (2) Japanese Shorthorn (3) Japanese Polled (4) Japanese Brown.

A: Beef containing high-quality fat that allows you to savor *umami* is called “*shimofuri*.”

B: With individual identification numbers, traceability applies to all Japanese beef. (<http://www.id.nbc.go.jp/english/>)