



## Fruits



Dried persimmon



A wide variety of fruits are cultivated and enjoyed in Japan. Peaches and persimmons have a particularly long history. They were introduced from China way back in the 3rd century. There are two main types of persimmons: **amagaki**, or sweet persimmons, and **shibugaki**, or astringent persimmons. The astringent ones are inedible until they are dried or soaked in alcohol or hot water. Dried persimmons are very sweet and are often served with tea. Persimmons are rich in both vitamin C and carotene, which is converted to vitamin A in the body. Persimmon leaves contain antiseptic properties and are used for **kaki-no-ha** sushi, which is sushi wrapped in persimmon leaves. They can also be eaten fried, as **tempura**, or made into tea. **Nashi**, or Japanese pears, also have a long history, as do grapes. Grape cultivation began over 800 years ago in the Kamakura period. In addition to a rich variety of table grapes, many grapes are grown to make juice and wine.

The **unshu mikan**, or satsuma mandarin orange, as it's known in the West, is cultivated in regions with a relatively mild climate. Cultivation began in the mid-18th century, first as a luxury gift item.

As production increased, it became a popular winter fruit, rich in vitamin C. The cultivation of apples began in the mid-19th century in northern Japan and other regions with colder climates. Apples are widely eaten. Not only for their sweet taste but also for the benefits they offer the digestive system. These are just some of the many fragrant and delicious fruits that are cultivated in Japan, each with a different historical background. Thanks to continuous fruit development over many years, Japan has some of the highest quality fruits in the world.



## Japanese Green Tea & Sweets



Sencha and fresh sweets

Tea was first introduced to Japan from China in the form of compressed or brick tea. By the 12th century the drinking of **matcha**, a powdered tea brewed in hot water, became popular among Buddhist priests and the aristocracy, giving rise to the highly aesthetic and philosophical tea ceremony: the way of tea. The mid-18th century saw the development of **sencha**, a loose tea made by steaming, rolling and drying tea leaves. Ever since then **sencha** has been at the heart of Japanese green tea.

Japanese tea refers to **sencha** and other forms of green tea in which the leaves are heat-treated before drying to prevent oxidation and fermentation. There are various types of green tea, depending on the production process, which part of the tea leaf is used and the production area. Some are best drunk after meals, while others go very well



Dorayaki

with sweets. Green tea is rich in vitamin C and is believed to have other health benefits that include regulating blood cholesterol and preventing hypertension.

The development of **wagashi**, Japanese sweets, went hand in hand with the cultivation of tea in Japan. Just as there are different types of Japanese tea, Japanese sweets can be classified into three categories according to moisture content: fresh sweets, semi-moist sweets and dry sweets. From plain rice crackers to delicately colored sweets with seasonal design motifs, the variety is endless. Many sweets are associated with seasonal events and annual customs. Most traditional Japanese sweets are made from non-animal products (apart from eggs) such as **azuki** beans, sweet Japanese beans and rice flour. Traditional Japanese sweets are thus free of fat and tend to have fewer calories than Western sweets, such as pies or chocolate, which are often rich in butter and cream.



Matcha

Fresh sweets