



Sushi and Sashimi

Sashimi and Soy Sauce

Sashimi is a Japanese food that consists of thinly sliced fresh raw fish served with a dipping sauce. Initially, such sauces were typically tart in flavor, made of rice vinegar mixed with **wasabi** or ginger. But once soy sauce became widely available in the 18th century, it was adopted as the main condiment for sushi and **sashimi**. Today, **sashimi** is eaten by first garnishing the fish with a small amount of **wasabi**, then using chopsticks to give it a quick dip in soy sauce. Because the fish used is so fresh, there is no "fishy" odor, but instead a rich, satisfying flavor.

Sashimi is most often served accompanied

by thinly sliced vegetables, like **daikon** radish, perilla sprouts or leaves, and chrysanthemum. Sushi, on the other hand, is served with thinly sliced sweet pickled ginger. Garnishes like these, which enhance the flavor and appearance of the dish, are a hallmark of Japanese cuisine, serving both to evoke a sense of the seasons and to accentuate the delicious taste of **sashimi** and sushi.

Kinds of Sushi

Originally, sushi was a means of preserving fish by fermenting it with rice and salt. However by the 17th century sushi was being made with vinegar-seasoned rice. In the early 19th century, **nigirizushi** was invented,



Sashimi



Nigirizushi

with tuna becoming a mainstay ingredient. Today, there are many kinds of sushi besides **nigiri**. **Barazushi** is rice flavored with vinegar, salt and sugar mixed with other ingredients including fish, egg and sliced cooked vegetables such as **shiitake** mushroom, carrot and **kampyo**, dried gourd strips. **Norimakizushi** is made by using sheets of **nori** seaweed to roll up ingredients inside rice. Sushi is a healthy, low-calorie food prepared with little or no oil.

Types of Seafood Used in Sushi and Sashimi

Today, while the seafood ingredients used in **nigirizushi** vary by season and area, staple species include tuna, yellowtail, red sea bream and squid. The growth of farmed red sea bream and yellowtail has made them a tasty and affordable ingredient. Shrimp, octopus and scallops are also widely used.

In addition to these, sea urchin and **ikura**, or salmon roe, are used as ingredients in **nigirizushi**. While tuna is the most common type of **sashimi** today, it was once considered a low-grade fish. It was not until the 19th century, near the end of the shogunate, that tuna gradually came to be eaten in Japan. At first, it was mainly popular in Edo, today's Tokyo. In the Kansai area of western Japan, where the custom of eating white-flesh fish like sea bream and flounder remains strong, consumption of tuna is less prevalent than in eastern Japan. Fresh seafood contains healthy proteins, and the omega 3 fatty acids DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) found in tuna, red sea bream, yellowtail and mackerel are said to help prevent thrombosis and reduce blood fat.