



## Tempura

**Tempura** is said to have been brought to Japan by the Portuguese in the form of fried ground fish or other deep fried foods. **Tempura** in the form of white-flesh fish and shrimp lightly fried in batter developed in the late 18th century when people began frying seafood caught in today's Tokyo Bay and nearby waters. Creating **tempura**'s thin coating of fried batter demands skillful control of the temperature of the egg, water and flour, as well as a careful frying technique. Nowadays, seafood such as shrimp, whiting, squid and scallops are commonly used, complemented by batter-fried vegetables such as sweet potatoes, green beans, Japanese ginger and pumpkin. In Japanese, **tempura** consisting of only vegetables

is referred to by a separate term: **shojin-age**.

**Tempura** is usually eaten by either dipping it into a sauce called **tentsuyu**, made from broth stock, soy sauce and **mirin**, with a garnish of grated **daikon** radish and ginger, or by seasoning it with salt alone or a mix of salt and either powdered Japanese pepper or powdered Japanese green tea. In Japan, grated **daikon** radish and ginger was historically used as an antidote for poison, while the use of Japanese pepper and powdered green tea for their pungent taste, smell and color is a hallmark of Japanese cuisine.

Fried in vegetable oil, **tempura** greatly enriches the natural flavors of its ingredients yet is also remarkably healthy.



Tempura



## Vegetarian Cuisine



Sesame tofu

Ganmodoki

Steamed vegetables

**Shojin-ryori**, a form of vegetarian cuisine in Japan, was originally brought back to Buddhist temples by priests who studied in China from the 12th century onward. Influenced by Buddhist teachings that prohibit the killing of living creatures, **shojin-ryori** developed as a cuisine that does not use animal products. The featured ingredients are vegetables, beans and potatoes. In order to supplement the protein content, soy and soy products as well as wheat gluten are also used. In the quest to add zest to the otherwise bland flavor of a vegetable-based diet, cooks turned to sesame and sesame oil, which contains large amounts of fatty oils, and created dishes that mimic traditional meat-based foods. One example is **ganmodoki**, a dish of fried **tofu** and vegetables that mimics goose

meat. One signature **shojin-ryori** foodstuff is sesame **tofu**, similar to kneaded **tofu**. This is made from ground sesame and arrowroot starch. Broths based on seaweed and dried **shiitake** mushrooms are flavored with **miso**, soy sauce, **sake** and **mirin**.

During the 18th century, taking advantage of Japan's abundant and high-quality water, the firmer **tofu** that had originally come to Japan from China was improved to create a softer type that spread in popularity among the masses. **Tofu** contains less fatty oils than meat but is high in proteins, leading to its nickname, "meat from the fields." **Koyadofu**, freeze-dried **tofu**, and **yuba**, a **tofu** product made by skimming heated soy milk, are essential ingredients in Japanese vegetarian cuisine.