



The Washoku Way

Japan's Nuanced Approach to Food



MAFF

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Preface

For many people around the world, sushi is the most familiar type of Japanese cuisine. Yet while it is easily had in cities small and large across the globe, there are many aspects to making it well that are less familiar. Line-caught fish, for example, are preferable to netted hauls for a proper sushi topping. The sharpness of the knife and how deftly it is used greatly affect the flavor of sushi as well. Concerns like these are why Japanese cuisine, known as washoku in its homeland, intrigues chefs and other food lovers with its breadth and depth.

This book introduces the great variety washoku offers, in foods ranging from the traditional to the innovative and the casual to the formal. In its pages you'll also find a host of reasons why the washoku approach to cooking and eating is not only delicious, but one of the healthiest choices you can make.

Though its overall land mass is limited, mountainous Japan has abundant rainfall, plentiful snowmelt, and a vast network of underground water channels that feed its paddy fields and

crops. This ease of cultivation has spawned a remarkable food culture where the old ways are still very much in place. The ancient wisdom of curing, preserving, and fermenting foods still thrives today, and is why we have dashi, miso, soy sauce, and sake—integral parts of Japanese cuisine that are used around the world.

The washoku approach stresses that these blessings of nature be handled with care and gratitude. The ingredients we use are the very source of life itself, so nothing is wasted. Respectful of the environment, washoku celebrates our coexistence with all living things on earth.

And washoku is pleasing to the eye. Its visual harmony stems from a mindful balance of flavor, color, and method of preparation, as well as the eclectic mix of well-made crafts used for tableware. As you enjoy a washoku meal, take a moment to savor the experience with all five senses. A truly rich world beckons.

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