

include a lineup of appetizers for drinking alcohol, while there are regions where only *nishime* (vegetables cooked with *dashi*) is prepared as *osechi-ryori*. However, it is common that the dishes express the wish to beckon fortune and ward off misfortune, while sharing the table with deities.

Ozohni (soup with *mochi*), also eaten on New Year's Day, was originally the most important and formal appetizer for drinking alcohol among samurais. On New Year's Day, *ozohni* with *mochi* inside and *otoso* (rice wine for New Year) are always served. Round-shaped *mochi* as used in *kagamimochi* symbolizes the souls of deities. It is also called "*hagatame-mochi* (*mochi* for firm teeth)," and eating *kagamimochi* on January 11th has a meaning of wishing for longevity with healthy teeth.

Other events for sharing the table and wishing to be able to spend every day in peace include five *sekku* (season-related festivals). These are January 7th ("*jinjitsu*"), when people eat *nanakusa-gayu* (rice porridge with seven spring herbs), March 3rd ("*joushi*"), when people eat *kusamochi* (sweet

mochi seasoned with *mugwort*) that is believed to have the effect on quelling negative vibes, May 5th ("*tango*"), when people wish for health by eating *chimaki* (steamed rice wrapped in bamboo leaves) and *kashiwamochi* (sweet *mochi* wrapped with Kashiwa oak leaves), July 7th ("*shichiseki*"), wishing to stay disease-free by eating thin noodles called *sakubei*, and September 9th ("*chouyou*"), wishing for immortality with *kikuzake* (sake served with chrysanthemum petals).

As for rites of passage, *sekihan* (red rice), which was believed to quell negative vibes and bad luck, used to be eaten not only on celebrating occasions but also in Buddhist ceremonies such as bon festivals and in funerals.

The tradition of WASHOKU, constantly in pursuit of things good for one's body, culminated in a healthy food culture that is rarely found in other regions of the world. Strong orientation towards the wish for health and longevity lies at the heart of WASHOKU.



Ootoso

Ootoso, enjoyed with *ozohni* on New Year's Day, is served by using a sake server called *choushi*, three stacked-up cups, a cup stand, and a tray to put all these on. *Ootoso* was originally a medicinal liquor made by immersing *tososan*, which is a blend of several types of herb, in sake or *mirin* (sweet rice wine).



Ozohni

Eating *ozohni* with round *mochi*, a symbol of the soul, inside originally meant to be given the power of deities. Above is *ozohni* seasoned with *Saikyo* miso, which is familiar in Kyoto. The characteristics of this type of *ozohni* are that it cooks round *mochi* without grilling, and contains *kashiraimo* (mother yam), which was considered a lucky charm from ancient times.



Okuiizome

Okuiizome is a ritual held for a child 100 days old, with a wish for being able to have no trouble eating for a lifetime. In the ritual, a menu of "one soup and three dishes," including sea bream with its head and tail on, is served. "Stone for firm teeth," wishing for the baby to have good teeth, is also indispensable.



Sekihan

Red-colored adzuki beans were believed to have the effect of quelling negative vibes and bad luck, so it was frequently used for celebration. Eating steamed glutinous rice is an old custom in Japanese culture. For instance, *sekihan* is served as a dish for special days, and is especially indispensable for festive occasions.

(4) Diversity of WASHOKU

The climate generated the diversity of WASHOKU

Because the Japanese archipelago spreads wide north-south, there is a wide variety of regional food culture. There are local cuisines and processing/preservation techniques inherited in each region. The more you know about the map of Japanese food, the more interesting it becomes.

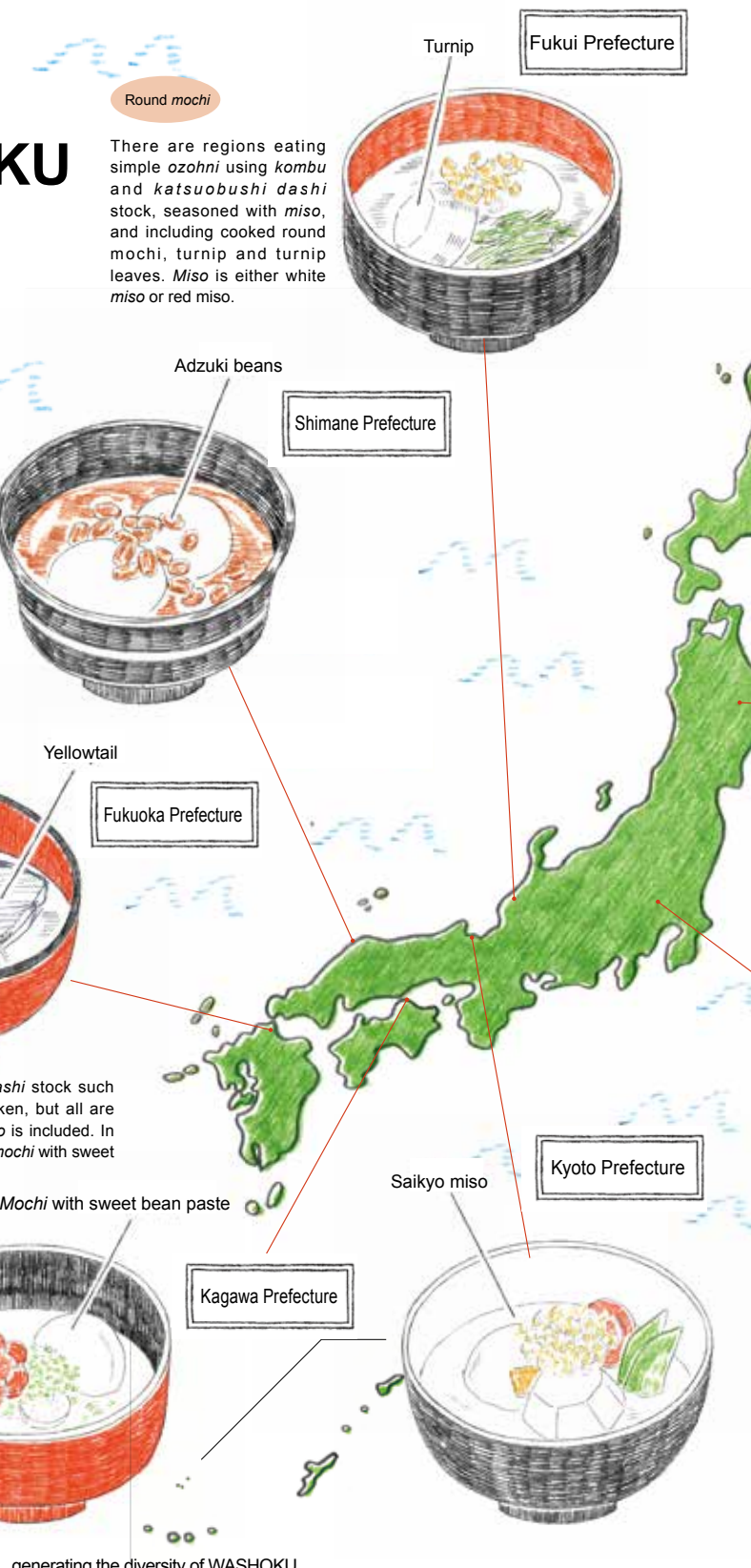
Ozohni Map

Ozohni eaten on New Year's Day varies widely among regions and households, in terms of the ingredients of *dashi* stock and seasoning used, the shape of *mochi*, and other ingredients in the soup. *Dashi* ingredients include *kombu*, *katsubushi*, dried small fish, dried squid, conger and chicken. For seasoning, salt, soy sauce and miso are used. The shape of *mochi* is different, either round or square, and there is also a difference of baking it or not before cooking with soup. In some regions, *mochi* with sweet bean paste is stuffed inside is used. Other ingredients in the soup include vegetables, seafood and chicken, and the specialty product of the region is often used. In Okinawa, people eat *nakami-jiru* (soup using pork organ meat) instead of *ozohni*. The map here shows some of characteristic *ozohni* types throughout Japan.

"You're from XX Prefecture, so you may have eaten that." "How do you prepare *mochi* for *ozohni* and what do you use for *ozohni* seasoning?" Traditional dishes and foodstuff may differ for each region throughout Japan, and the seasoning also differs by regions.

With different climates, foodstuff that can be harvested and cooking methods have become different, resulting in the formation of *washoku* with abundant regional flavors. Such diversity is also one of the attractive points of *washoku*, and it is one of the things to look forward to when travelling in Japan.

Back in the days when logistics systems and preservation technology were not developed as now, it was an important and difficult task to use foodstuff effectively and stably without wasting them. People used wisdom and added improvements to invent effective food processing and preservation methods. Such wisdom resulted in

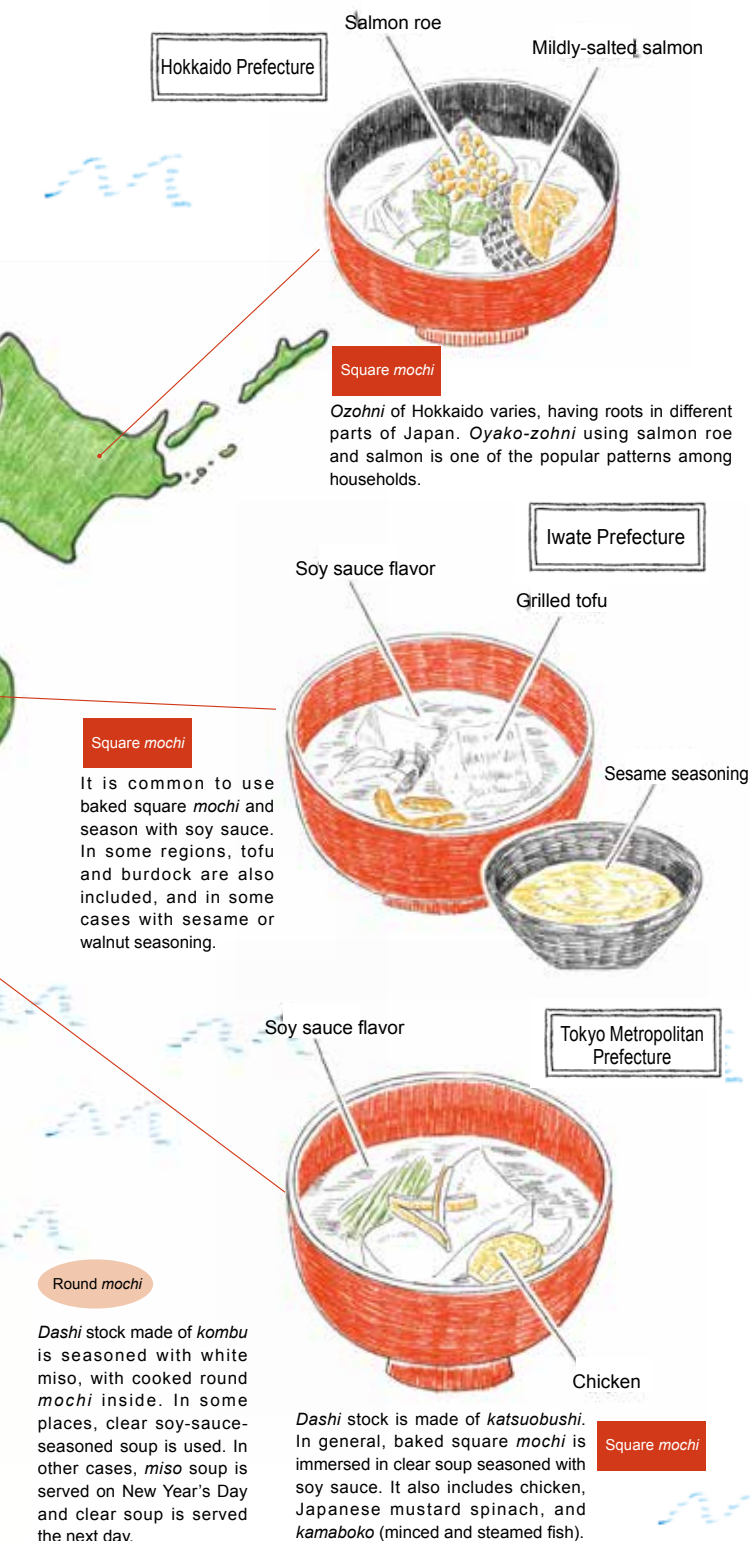


generating the diversity of WASHOKU.

Diversity of food culture generated from the difference of climate

In lands far from sea, wisdom was developed to improve the storage life of fish. In the northern region experiencing harsh winters, techniques improved to preserve vegetables for a long time.

Dried fish, *mochi*, pickled *ume*, freeze-dried tofu, etc. are all long-life processed foods created a long time ago. Similarly, fermented food is also a type of ancient processed food in Japan. These are foods with improved storage life, nutritional value or flavor by the agency of microorganisms or with the effect of enzymes. Pickled vegetables are one such fermented food.



Miso in Japan

– Region and characteristics –

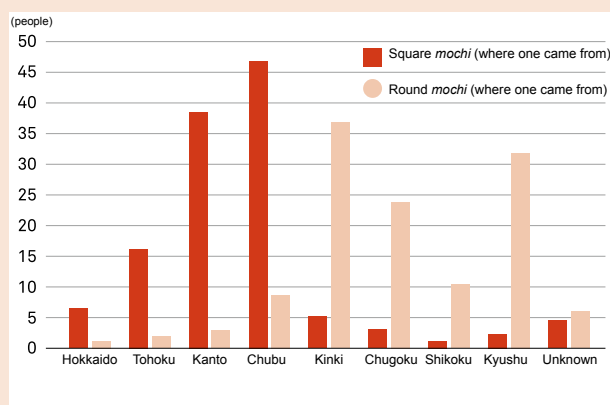
Miso can be roughly divided into three types, in terms of manufacturing method and ingredients. Rice *miso* is common throughout Japan, which is made by fermenting steamed or boiled soy bean with salt and malted rice added. Replacing malted rice with malted barley will make barley *miso*. Soy bean *miso* is made by fermenting and maturing soy bean. Rice *miso* can be divided into salty red *miso* using steamed soy bean and malted for a long period, and mildly sweet white *miso* using boiled soy bean and malted for a short period.

Major type and region		Characteristic
Rice <i>miso</i>	Tsugaru <i>miso</i>	Mature for long period. The mainstream is salty, red <i>miso</i> type.
	Sendai <i>miso</i>	Traditional <i>miso</i> inherited in Sendai. The mainstream is salty red <i>miso</i> type matured for a long period.
	Shinshu <i>miso</i>	Mainly made in Nagano Prefecture. Salty <i>miso</i> with light orange color.
	Edo sweet <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet red <i>miso</i> using more malt and less salt compared to ordinary <i>miso</i> .
	Saikyo <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet white <i>miso</i> containing a lot of rice malt, mainly made in the Kansai Region.
	Sanuki <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet white <i>miso</i> made in Kagawa Prefecture. It is also used for an- <i>mochi</i> <i>zohni</i> .
	Fuchu <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet white <i>miso</i> containing a lot of rice malt, mainly made in Hiroshima Prefecture.
Barley <i>miso</i>	Kyushu, Shikoku, Chugoku	Mildly sweet light orange <i>miso</i> fermented with malted barley.
Soy bean <i>miso</i>	Haccho <i>miso</i> / Sanshu <i>miso</i>	Deep red-brown-colored <i>miso</i> made by making steamed soy bean ball, and by growing <i>koji</i> molds.



Shape of mochi

The result of interview on the shape of *mochi* included in *ozohni* is as follows. The share of square *mochi* is large in the east and that of round *mochi* is large in the west, bordering at the Chubu region.



Source: "100 Selected Ozohni" (Agency for Cultural Affairs)

For example, there is *iburigakko*, a local cuisine dish of Akita Prefecture. Daikon radishes are hung over the open hearth and smoked with an open fire using oak and cherry wood. Then, the radish is made into pickles with rice bran and salt. This is wisdom in Akita Prefecture, where winter comes early, to dry daikon radish quickly to improve its storage life. With time and effort, the flavor is condensed and a rich taste is generated that is different from fresh vegetables.

An example of preserved seafood is *narezushi*. Fish is matured with salt and cooked rice for several days to several months and fermented with lactic acid bacteria. It holds down the growing of bacteria, and preservation for a long period became possible. In addition, it adds umami. Some of the *nare-zushi* local cuisine dishes throughout Japan are *Funa-zushi* of Shiga Prefecture, *nare-zushi* using mackerel and Pacific *saury* of Wakayama Prefecture, *heshiko-narezushi* of Obama

City, Fukui Prefecture and *hatahata-zushi* of Akita Prefecture.

Fermented seasoning such as miso, fermented soy bean, and soy sauce can be considered as the key to the taste of Japanese cuisine. There are also differences in preparation methods and taste among these, depends on the region. For instance, there are many variations of miso: Tsugaru miso, a salty miso using soy bean and malted rice and fermented for a long period, mildly sweet Saikyo miso containing a large amount of malted rice, red-brown Haccho miso of Nagoya using malted soy bean, and barley miso of the Kyushu Region made of barley.


The diversity is obvious by taking a look at the variations of *ozohni* as an example, made of regional specialty products, fermented seasoning and *mochi*.

Climate and food culture in Japan are deeply connected, developing a wide variety of foods that the world pays attention to.


The road WASHOKU takes

The chronological table shows the establishment and changes of washoku, and it becomes visible that washoku has been constantly improved by the people of each era by also being influenced by food culture abroad.


Heisei period	Showa period (after World War II)	Showa period (before and during World War II)	Taisho period	Meiji period
1989-	1945-1989	1926-1945	1912-1926	1869-1912
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food self-sufficiency ratio decreased to 39-40%. - Sales of rebot foods increased. - The penetration of microwave ovens reached 90%. - Genetically-modified foods developed. - Environmental issues such as global warming became a serious problem. - Food at the time of disaster attracted attention after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the Great East Japan Earthquake. - Sustainability became a social issue. - Changes in home cooking and having meals individually at home were recognized as problems, and washoku is being reviewed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post-war style of school lunch with milk and bread started. - Black market emerged throughout Japan. - Food prices increased. - Standard figure for people's nutrition was set by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. - Movement developed for improving the living of agricultural households. - Instant foods such as instant noodles developed and started commercial sale. - Refrigerators/freezers became widely used and frozen foods became popular. - Japanese-style dietary life with ideal nutrition balance was advocated. - The number of family restaurants and fast food stores increased. - Convenience stores were developed. - Japanese cuisine was westernized and simplified, and rice intake decreased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food was in shortage due to war. - Food distribution control was introduced. The government distributed almost all foods, including rice, by ration tokens. - Production of substitute foods such as sweet potatoes increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumption of substitute foods such as potatoes and breads was encouraged in reaction to the price increase and shortage of rice supply. - The National Institute of Nutrition was founded and nutrition science was developed. - Semi-Western dishes became widespread in urban areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The taboo against eating meat based on the idea of "kegare (uncleanness)" became widespread. - On the other hand, meat was eaten as a special nourishment. - Cultivating sweet potatoes and potatoes were encouraged in preparation for the time of famine. - <i>Wagashi</i> (Japanese sweets) was completed. - Hand-rolled sushi and tempura became a boom in Edo. - The ban on eating meat was lifted and eating <i>gyu-nabe</i> (similar to sukiyaki) became a boom. - Books on western cuisine such as "Seiyo Ryori Shinan Sho" were published. - Western cuisine restaurants were developed. - The average intake ratio of rice became 53%. - Cookbooks for general households were published. - Girl's school educated about food. - Problem of beriberi was actively argued. - Pork production increased according to the shortage of beef supply. - Production and development of Western sweets



Modern meals



Semi-Western dishes become widespread



Eateries such as soba stands becomes popular among the general public

It is said that rice arrived in the late Jomon period, and that the cultivation of rice spread throughout Japan in the Yayoi period.

Daikyo ryori in the Heian period was a cuisine to welcome guests by aristocrats. It was a style serving steamed rice firmly and highly in a bowl, assorted with various seafood which were eaten by dipping in seasoning.

In the Kamakura period, vegetarian meals for Buddhists free of animal foodstuff developed under the influence of a Zen school. Dogen Zenji wrote "Tenzo Kyokun," a guide for preparing meals, which he considered as a part of Zen training, and "Fushoku Hanpou," which explains how to express appreciation for foods and the manners of eating.

In the Muromachi period, *honzen ryori* was formulated as a cuisine culture among the upper class. This style diffused during the late Edo period as ceremonial dishes served on occasions such as weddings, and was inherited

up to the Showa period. Dishes like cooked rice, soup, main and side dishes and pickles are put on *honzen*, and contributed on the establishment of a traditional style of meal, centering around cooked rice. Sake and appetizers enjoyed with sake also developed with *honzen* style.

In the Azuchi-Momoyama period, the *kaiseki* style developed with tea ceremony. Based on the "one soup and three dishes" style, *kaiseki* incorporated spiritual nature as well, by focusing on the use of seasonal foodstuff and paying attention also to the decoration of the eating space. This style was handed down to the modern era together with its spirit.

In urban areas in the Edo period, eateries such as soba, tempura and sushi stalls and luxurious restaurants diffused. There was also frequent publishing of books on cuisine, and *kaiseki ryori* enjoying sake and appetizers at restaurants was also formulated. In addition, the basics of Japanese sweets were generally

Edo period	Azuchi-Momoyama period	Muromachi period	Kamakura period	Heian period	Nara period	Asuka period	Kofun period	Yayoi period	Johmon period
17 th -19 th Century	16 th -17 th Century	14 th -16 th Century	12 th -14 th Century	8 th -12 th Century	8 th Century	7 th Century	Around 500	Around 240	Around BC 200 Around BC 2500 BC 3000 BC 9000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Ryori Monogatari," the first published book on cuisine in Japan, was issued. - Eateries and restaurants became widespread in urban areas. - <i>Kaiseki-ryori</i> style enjoying sake served in restaurants was formulated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tea ceremony style was completed by Sen no Rikyu. - <i>Kaiseki-ryori</i> style for tea ceremony was established. - Toyotomi Hideyoshi held the Kitan-dai-sance (prosperous tea gathering). - Europe entered the Age of Exploration and Western-style sweets and chili pepper arrived in Japan through <i>Nanban</i> trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Honzen ryori</i>, dishes to welcome guests by samurai, was formulated. - Professional chefs called "<i>nouchou-nin</i>" appeared and formulated their original style. - Notched mortar widely used. - Sake-brewing technology progressed. - Tea ceremony style shifted from <i>shoin</i>-style to <i>wabi</i>-style. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dogen wrote "Tenzo Kyokun" and "Fushoku Hanpou," which guide the manner of preparing and eating meals in the Zen school. - Vegetarian meals were developed for Buddhists using vegetable-origin foods only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Daikyo ryori</i> (dishes for banquets) of aristocrats and annual functions were established under the influence of Chinese culture. - Tofu arrived from China. - Preparation method of powdered green tea was brought back from Song China by Eisai. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "So," made by boiling down milk, was used as a tribute to the Imperial court. - Use of chopsticks became widespread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Kentshi</i> (Japanese missions to Tang China) brought the food culture of the continent. - In 675, Emperor Temmu prohibited eating beef, horsemeat, dog and monkey meat, and chicken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobile furnace made of Hajiki pottery was used. - Steaming rice by using Hajiki pottery steamer became popular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rice cultivation spread. <i>Nare-zushi</i>, made by fermenting fish was invented. - In the "Gishi Wajin-Den" book written in the late 3rd Century in China, it is stated that people in Wa (Japan) eat fresh vegetables in winter and summer, use a pedestaled bowl for drinking and eating, and eat with their hands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global warming progressed and the game hunting shifted from large animals to small animals. - Holes to store acorns became widely used in pit-dwelling houses in southern Kyushu. - Vegetable-origin foods such as acorns became important food. - Wet-field rice cultivation arrived in Japan.



Honzen ryori, dishes to welcome guests by samurai



Dishes to welcome guests by the aristocrats of the Heian period



Establishment of rice cultivation in rice paddies

established in this period.

On the other hand, the everyday staple food in Japan was generally *katameshi*, mixing barley, various grains and potatoes, or foods using wheat such as *udon*. The tendency continued up to the Showa period, and the original culture of WASHOKU developed in each region.

Since the Meiji period, where Japan started to actively import Western culture, books on Western cuisine were published, and Western cuisine restaurants opened in urban areas. In the late Meiji period, many cookbooks for households were published one after another, and many semi-Western dishes, which customized Western dishes and incorporated washoku, were introduced.

Nutrition science was developed with the foundation of the National Institute of Nutrition in the Taisho period, and interest in the nutrition of everyday meals

gradually diffused.

After World War II, where the country experienced hunger, it was recommended to take animal protein and fat as side dishes other than carbohydrates in rice. As a result, by around the 1980s, the meals of Japanese people further improved their nutritional balance, adding an adequate amount of milk, dairy foods, meat, fish and vegetables to cooked rice. The dietary habit of this period is referred to as the "Japanese-style dietary habit." However, the Westernization and simplification of the dietary habit progressed thereafter, and the food self-sufficiency ratio declined below 40%. The basic style of meals is being changed mainly among young people, and skipping meals or eating alone has become an issue. Thus, it is now required to review washoku once again.

Characteristics of WASHOKU (1) Menu structure

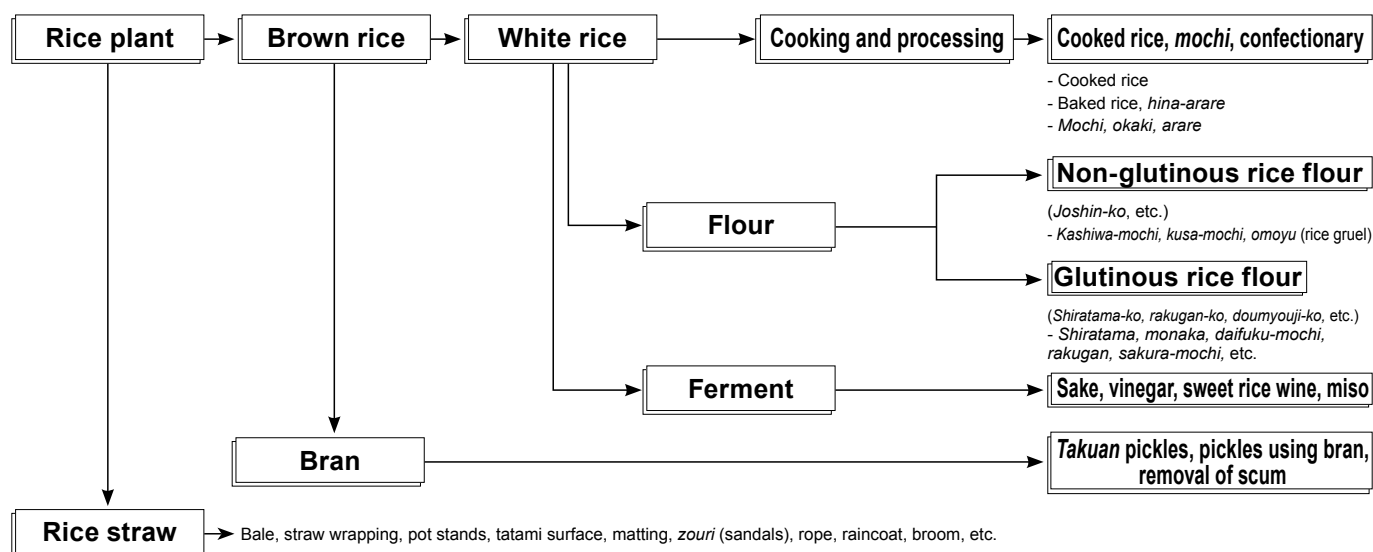
Soup and dishes are for eating cooked rice. “One soup and three dishes” is the basic style of washoku

“One soup and three dishes” is a combination of cooked rice, soup and pickles, with several dishes added.

“One soup and three dishes” is a structure of menu adding three dishes to cooked rice, soup and pickles. In this photo, there are grilled fish (back right), stewed vegetables (back left) and boiled and seasoned Japanese mustard spinach (center). A bowl of cooked rice is supposed to be placed at the front left side of the person, soup at the front right side, and pickles at the center.



Rice is deeply involved with the lifestyle of Japanese people.



Japonica rice and Indica rice

Major varieties of rice grown today throughout the world include Indica rice (Indian-type rice) and Japonica rice (Japanese-type rice). Indica is a type called long rice, while Japonica is a short, round rice widely eaten in Japan today. Starch, the main component of rice, includes amylose and amylopectin. While Indica rice containing more amylose is less sticky, Japonica rice including less amylose is more sticky, and tastes delicious to the palate of Japanese people. Dishes like *onigiri* and sushi, with cooked rice shaped in balls, were invented with this Japonica rice.

The production amount of rice in the world is about 600 million tons, approximately the same as wheat, and more than 90% of rice is grown in Asian countries, including Japan. Japonica rice accounts for about 15% of the total, and is mainly cultivated in Japan, the Korean Peninsula, the northeast part of China, and the northern part of Taiwan. On the other hand, the cultivation area of Indica rice is mainly South Asia, including India, the Bengal region of Bangladesh, Indochina Peninsula (mainly Thailand), the central and southern part of China, and Indonesia.



Japonica



Indica

Non-glutinous rice and glutinous rice

Japanese people usually eat non-glutinous rice at meals, while they use glutinous rice for making *sekihan* and *mochi*. While the nutrition value is virtually the same, the composition of starch is different. The ratio of amylose and amylopectin of non-glutinous rice is about 2:8, while glutinous rice is composed mostly of amylopectin. That is why glutinous rice is stickier than non-glutinous rice, and is suitable for making *mochi*. In Japan, the characteristics of both types of rice are utilized effectively to create various dishes and confectionaries by using rice grain or flour, or by fermenting into sake and *mirin* (sweet rice wine).

Cooked rice; soup of *dashi* stock made of *kombu* or *katsubushi* and seasoned with miso or salt, with some ingredients; pickles such as salted pickles or pickles using bran or sake lees; side dishes such as grilled, stewed or dressed foods. "One soup and three dishes" is the combination of these four elements.

As a basic rule, "one soup and three dishes" refers to a style including one soup and three side dishes. Pickles, that refresh the mouth during the meal, and cooked rice are always served as basic items, so they are not counted as a part of the "three dishes."

In contrast to the "one soup and three dishes," which is the structure of daily meals, "two soups and five dishes" appeared frequently in the Edo period. This means two types of soup and five side dishes, which used to be the basic structure of meal to welcome guests. Two small tables were used for one person. In contrast, "one soup and three dishes" is served on a single small table, showing that this is the ordinary daily household meal.

There are also various types of soup. Bony parts of fish removed when making fillet are used for soup. *Kenchin-jiru* is a soup of various vegetables and tofu. There are other various chunky soups in various regions, and it is also one of the characteristics of washoku to eat rice with soup.

The greatest characteristic of "one soup and three dishes" is that soup, pickles and dishes all exist just for eating cooked rice. At the base of the concept of "one soup and three dishes," there is an idea that cooked rice is the main dish, and the other three elements are side dishes. The basic style of

washoku used to be eating plenty of cooked rice with a limited amount of side dishes, and controlling the caloric intake with the amount of cooked rice.

Where did rice come from, which is essential for WASHOKU?

Let us also look at cooked rice, which is indispensable for WASHOKU.

There are two types of rice: glutinous rice and non-glutinous rice. Glutinous rice, which is strongly viscous, is used for *okowa* (hard, steamed rice) like *sekihan*, while non-glutinous rice is less sticky and is usually eaten as cooked rice for daily meals.

It is said that the cultivation of rice started more than 10,000 years ago, originally by growing wild rice. The land of origin according to the widely-accepted theory is the basin of the Yangtze River in China. Indica rice diffused westward from there, while Japonica rice diffused eastward and settled in East Asia.

It can be said that the purpose of the menu of WASHOKU is to eat cooked rice with soup and side dishes. In other words, everything from *nikujaga* (stewed potatoes and meat seasoned with soy sauce) and *korokke* (Japanese-style croquette) to *tonkatsu* (Japanese-style cutlet) was fine as a side dish as long as it goes with cooked rice. The flexibility of side dishes is due to the strongly established WASHOKU style which places cooked rice as the main dish. If it were not for the basic structure referred to as "one soup and three dishes," there would be no difference with cuisines in other countries.

Vegetables



Characteristics of WASHOKU (2) Foodstuff

Foodstuff at the base of washoku The secret of deliciousness and diversity

“The deliciousness of washoku is enforced by the original taste of the ingredients. Foodstuff in Japan produced from nature in all four seasons has a surprisingly wide variety.

Japanese food culture is based on two main foodstuffs, vegetables and seafood

WASHOKU dishes had been prepared mainly by using vegetables and seafood. That is because various types of fish and vegetables could be obtained or grown abundantly throughout Japan, and also because eating meat was generally prohibited until Japan lifted its seclusion and started taking in international cultures.

It is said that the number of types of vegetables currently distributed in Japan is as many as about 150. There are also many categories, such as potatoes, legumes, root vegetables, stalk vegetables, leafy vegetables and

Many WASHOKU dishes use vegetables, and the number of types of vegetables currently distributed in Japan is as many as about 150. There are also many categories: potatoes, including potatoes and sweet potatoes; legumes including soy bean and adzuki bean; root vegetables such as daikon radish and turnip; stalk vegetables such as Welsh onion and *udo*; leafy vegetables such as Japanese mustard spinach and Chinese cabbage; and fruit vegetables including eggplants and cucumbers. In addition, there are mushrooms such as *shiitake* mushroom and *shimeji* mushroom, and edible wild plants such as ferns. Although we can obtain various kinds of vegetables throughout the year thanks to the development of logistics systems, it does not mean the same vegetables can be harvested throughout the country. For example, sweet potatoes are largely grown in the Kyushu region, while potatoes that are resistant to cold weather damage and grown in cool climates are cultivated in mountain areas such as Yamanashi and Nagano Prefectures, or the northern part of Japan. In addition, traditional vegetables that are the specialty products of certain region are now beginning to attract attention.

fruit vegetables. In addition, edible wild plants in forests such as mushrooms and wild mountain plants have also been widely consumed as foodstuff with improvements in cooking methods.

Vegetables marketed in Japan are diverse, including some imported from abroad after modernization or some that had been improved to make it easier to eat. On the other hand, there are traditional vegetables (indigenous vegetables) that have been grown from old times in Japan. Traditional vegetables refer to the kinds of vegetables that had been grown for more than three generations, and cultivated with methods that took root in the region. Currently, there are some active movements to preserve these kinds of

Oceanic fish



Seafood has been a precious and important foodstuff for Japan, an island country, from ancient times. According to the Quality Labeling Standard for Fresh Foods set forth by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, aquatic products consumed in Japan varies seawater fish such as tuna, bonito, sardines and horse mackerels, freshwater fish (stream fish) such as carp and eels, shellfish such as clams, crustaceans such as crabs and shrimp, aquatic animals such as turtles, and seaweed such as *kombu* and *wakame*. According to the results of the survey on people's taste preferences, conducted by Ajinomoto Co., Inc. in 2000, seafood was preferred over meat as a foodstuff. Among others, crab, shrimp and tuna were particularly preferred, and it seems that these are recognized as "luxurious foodstuff."

Stream fish



Freshwater fish (stream fish) have been appreciated as a precious source of protein in regions such as mountain areas where it is difficult to obtain fish from the sea. The above photo shows *ayu*, but various other stream fish including carp, eel, loach, *wakasagi* and *funa* are used as foodstuff in Japan. They are rarely consumed raw, because of the risk of fish being infested with parasites. Instead, various different cooking methods have been developed. Although freshwater fish has a unique scent and strong taste compared to seawater fish, it can be improved with cooking. For example, *koikoku* dishes hold down the scent of carp by stewing the fish meat for a long time, and *kabayaki* of eel adds strong seasoning. Another example of such improvement is *funa-zushi* made in Shiga Prefecture, which ferments *funa* fish caught in Lake Biwa with lactic acid bacteria together with salt and cooked rice, in order to improve the storage life and brings out umami.

Seaweed



Seaweed has been consumed in Japan from ancient days. It is still used conveniently in washoku, as a low-calorie foodstuff containing abundant minerals and vitamins. In Japan, about 50 kinds of seaweed are consumed. An ethnic group processing and eating such various types of seaweed is quite rare in the world. Seaweed can be categorized into three groups: red algae including *funori* and *tengusa*, brown algae including *wakame*, *kombu* and *mozuku*, and green algae including green laver and sea grapes. The use of them also varies. Some like *kombu* are used for preparing *dashi* stock. Some like *nori* are eaten after being dried, and some like *wakame* are used for miso soup and vinegared dishes. In addition, seaweed has been regarded as an important tribute to the deities, so it not only is consumed in daily meals but also is presented as offerings in festivals and rituals.

Shellfish



As can be seen by the fact that a large amount of the shells of abalone, clams and oysters are found in the shell mounds of the relics of the Jomon period, shellfish has been consumed as foodstuff from prehistoric era in Japan. Clam-digging is a familiar spring event, where people gather clams from the seabed when the tide is low. It is said that nearly 6,000 species of shellfish live in the waters of Japan, and especially bivalves such as clams and snails such as horned turban and whelk are familiar foodstuff. They are used in various dishes such as sashimi, clear soup, miso soup, stew, grilled shellfish and cooked with rice. They are also used for preparing *dashi* stock. They can also be stored for a long time when dried, so they were valued highly in trade from long ago.

traditional vegetables.

Seafood is also an indispensable foodstuff for WASHOKU. There is an abundant variety of seawater fish hauled in Japan, and there about 4,200 varieties, just by counting those that live in waters around Japan. Japanese coastal waters are a mine of fish, including sea bream that is always appreciated as a lucky charm, horse mackerels, sardines and saury.

Not only seawater fish, but also freshwater fish (stream fish) such as carp, *ayu*, *funa*, eels and loach that can be found in rice paddies were also a precious source of protein in regions far away from the sea. These foodstuff are used in dishes from long ago. Eel *kabayaki* is one of the popular menus. The cooking style also varies, as seen in *koi-no-arai*, immersing the thin strip

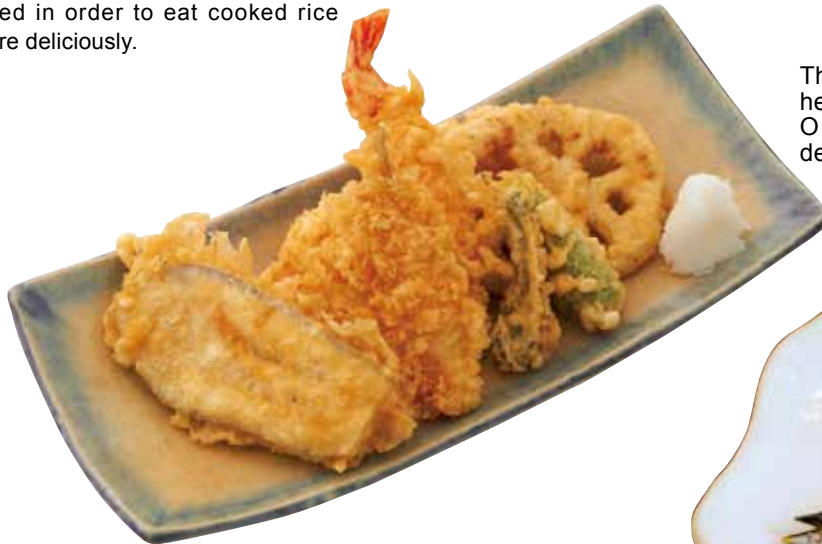
of carp fillet in hot water at about 50 degrees for a short time and then dipping into icy water, and eating with vinegared seasoning, or *koikoku*, where the chunk of carp meat is stewed with thick miso sauce.

Seaweed is also an essential foodstuff for washoku. *Kombu* has been used through the ages as a source of umami. *Wakame* is used in various dishes, including miso soup. *Nori* is indispensable for making *onigiri* (rice balls). There is also a wide variety of shellfish, and *noshi-awabi*, which is an abalone cut into thin strips and dried, is used as a symbol for rites and celebration.

Recently, the food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan is declining. There is also the issue of the increased use of imported foodstuff. However, the original WASHOKU is based on the natural blessings of Japan.

Cut, stew, grill, steam, boil, dress, deep-fry... Arrange the foodstuff this way and that to make it even tastier.

The base of a well-balanced menu of “one soup and three dishes” is cooked rice.
Cooking methods of side dishes developed in order to eat cooked rice even more deliciously.



Deep-fried dish
(Tempura)

This is a method to deep-fry foods in heated oil.
Oil is usually heated to 150-200 degrees.



Steamed dish
(Chawan-mushi)

This method adds heat to foodstuff by using the vapor of boiled water.



Pickled dish

(Cucumber and daikon pickled with rice bran and *takuan* pickles)

This is one of the methods to preserve perishable foods. In addition to the effect of salt, lactic acid fermentation is frequently used.



Soup

(Nameko mushroom miso soup)

This is a method mainly using *dashi* stock. Variations include clear soup, miso soup and thick soup.

Various cooking methods to bring out the deliciousness of seasonal foodstuff

There are various cooking methods for side dishes for washoku, such as stewing, grilling, steaming, boiling, dressing and deep-frying. By combining these methods with seasonal foodstuff such as vegetables, edible wild plants, seafood and seaweed, a wide variety of side dishes are prepared for the table.

Among various cooking methods used in washoku, the most characteristic should be the “raw dish.” The foodstuff is cut raw, placed on the plate and accompanied with seasoning and relishes. In most cases, sashimi refers to those using seafood, and the techniques such as cleaning, cutting and placing on the plate are currently winning attention from throughout the world. The method is completed with the combination of technology to keep ingredients

fresh and to place food beautifully on the plate. The combination of relish and seasoning is also closely considered, so that it goes perfectly with the fish. Relishes such as wasabi, ginger and mustard, the julienne daikon radish called “tsuma” or “ken,” green *shiso* (Japanese basil) leaves, parsnip roots, smartweed buds and *shiso* flowers that have antibacterial effect are added so that the dish also looks beautiful on the table.

Soup is an indispensable factor on the table together with cooked rice. The base of the soup is the umami of *dashi* extracted from *katsuo* *bushi*, *kombu*, dried small fish or dried shiitake mushroom, and the umami of other ingredients included in the soup. Some chunky soups are eaten also as a side dish.

Boiling is the method that takes advantage of the abundant water resources.



Dressed dish

(Vinegared cucumber and *wakame*)

This method dresses vegetables and seafood with sesame, *miso* or vinegar.



Stewed dish

(Chikuzen-ni)

This is a method to season foodstuff in cooking liquid while adding heat.



Grilled dish

(Salted and grilled saury)

Foodstuff are grilled by being placed relatively far from strong open fire. There also are methods to grill with indirect heat.



Simmered dish

(*Komatsuna ohitashi*)

Ohitashi is seasoned by immersing into seasoned liquid.



Raw dish

(Bonito sashimi)

Raw dishes include sashimi, *arai*, vinegared fish and pickled fish.



Boiled dish

(Mori soba)

This is a method to boil noodles made of wheat and buckwheat.

A generous amount of water is boiled and foodstuff is dipped and heated. In cases like leafy vegetables or soba, the foodstuff is further rinsed with running water after being boiled in order to remove scum and improve texture. *Ohitashi* of spinach or Japanese mustard spinach we prepare and eat as ordinary foods are dishes established in Japan, blessed with abundant water resources, and is quite unique in the world.

Traditional grilled dishes like salted and grilled saury are prepared by sprinkling salt over foodstuff and grilling slowly over direct heat.

Stewing must be one of the most popular cooking methods throughout the world. In Japan, the original taste of ingredients is brought out while arranging the taste with fermented seasonings made of soy bean, such as soy sauce and miso.

Pan-frying with oil is rarely used for traditional washoku dishes, but it is very popular nowadays and is adding further variety to washoku.

The examples of cooking methods and dishes given here are mainly eaten with cooked rice. However, there are other main dishes using the flour of wheat, buckwheat and other grains. The representative example is noodles, such as *udon*, soba and *somen*. They are usually boiled, but are also stewed for dishes like *nikomi*.

Washoku is a combination of various types of dishes. If the taste of the ingredients and strong umami can be brought out, deliciousness can be felt with minimum seasonings. This concept allows us to enjoy various types of dishes.

Characteristics of WASHOKU (4) Flavor

Umami, the greatest wisdom discovered by Japanese to “eat deliciously”

The most important element for the taste of washoku is *dashi* stock. It is the base for miso soup and clear soup, and is the cornerstone of flavor that determines the taste of various dishes including stewed dishes and *ohitashi*.

The fifth sense of taste, umami, is something Japan can be proud of to the world.

What cannot be forgotten when explaining the flavor of washoku is the presence of *dashi* stock. It is used as a base for various dishes such as soup and stew.

Why are Japanese people so fond of *dashi*? The key to the answer to this

question is umami. In the book of cuisine written in the Edo period says that “*dashi* is precisely the foundation of cooking.”

In 1907, Dr. Kikunae Ikeda was the first in the world to discover that one of the umami contents is glutamic acid, a type of amino acid. Study was further carried out thereafter mainly among Japanese researchers, and umami is now widely known as the fifth sense of taste, in addition to sweetness, saltiness,

About *dashi*

Katsuobushi



Kombu



The general method to prepare *dashi* is to extract the umami components from seafood or vegetables into water or hot water. The most frequently used ingredients for *dashi* are *kombu* and *katsuobushi*. Others include *niboshi* (dried small fish), vegetables, dried shiitake mushroom, fish guts, heads and bones. There are other methods to utilize the umami of ingredients, such as *ushio-jiru*.

Niboshi

Niboshi, made by drying boiled small fish, is often used for preparing soup. The most common ingredients of *niboshi* is Japanese anchovy. It is usually prepared with a relatively small fish like round herring, silver-striped round herring or flying fish.



Dried shiitake mushroom

Shiitake mushrooms, containing abundant umami components, are also one of the foodstuffs used for *dashi*. For preparing *dashi*, dried shiitake mushrooms are used because the umami and fragrance components of shiitake mushrooms increase when dried.

