

Ibaraki

Map No.8

Kanto



Goopy and crunchy

*Soboro-natto**Savory soybeans*

Natto is a traditional food made by fermenting soybeans. This is mixed with kiriboshi-daikon (white radish that has been shredded, dried, then reconstituted), and seasoned with soy sauce. The appeal of this recipe is the contrast between the softness of the natto beans and the crunchy texture of the kiriboshi-daikon.

Tochigi

Map No.9

Kanto



Summer mushrooms and noodles

*Chitake-soba**Soba noodles with chitake mushrooms*

Chitake mushrooms are plentiful in the woods from July, following the end of the monsoon rainy season. They have a superb taste and aroma, and make a great addition to the broth for noodle soup. In this recipe, the mushrooms are stir-fried with eggplant, then cooked in dashi stock with soy sauce and mirin as seasoning. This soup is then poured over the cooked soba noodles.

Tochigi

Map No.9

Kanto



Flavor that's stood the test of time

*Shimo-tsukare**Salmon and vegetable stew*

A traditional recipe that dates back to the Kamakura Period, some 800 years ago. It is made by simmering the heads of salted salmon in a heavy pot, along with roasted soybeans, grated daikon radish, and carrots. Sake lees are added toward the end of cooking, and it is seasoned with soy sauce. This dish keeps well and provides a good balance of nutrition. Because the ingredients are easily obtained, this dish has been a favorite for centuries.

Gunma

Map No.10

Kanto



Nutritious evening noodles

*Okkirikomi**Coarse-cut udon noodles*

This is a traditional farmers' recipe that could be prepared quickly after they finished working in the fields. Hand-made coarse-cut wheat noodles are simmered in a generous amount of broth together with seasonal vegetables and taro yams, seasoned with mirin (sweet rice liqueur) and soy sauce. Simple to prepare, this recipe caught on widely because it was tasty and nutritious.

Gunma

Map No.10

Kanto



Healthy jelly

Namaimo Konnyaku ryori | Konnyaku jelly

Konnyaku is a jelly-like food made from the corm of the Devil's Tongue plant. Virtually tasteless, it is valued for its texture and also has a reputation as a health food. It is mostly served hot, either slathered with miso (known as dengaku) or simmered in broth as an ingredient in oden hot pot. You may also come across it sliced finely and served cold (sashimi konnyaku) with a miso dip. Traditionally, the jelly is prepared from dried, powdered corms, but new methods using the grated raw corms have been developed, especially in Gunma Prefecture, which produces about 90% of the konnyaku grown in Japan.

Saitama

Map No.11

Kanto



Midday farm favorite

Hiyajiru-udon | Udon noodles in cold broth

Because it is easy to prepare, using locally grown ingredients, this has been a popular dish in farming communities for centuries. To prepare the noodle broth, sesame seeds are ground in a mortar with miso, with a little sugar to taste. Chopped shiso (perilla) leaf, cucumber and ginger root are added to this mix. Diluted with some water or dashi stock, it makes a simple, tasty noodle broth, perfect as a refreshing midday meal in the summer months.

Saitama

Map No.10

Kanto



Steamed bun snack

Iga-manju | "Chestnut" steamed buns

Rice is cooked with azuki beans, giving it a reddish color, and this is wrapped around a steamed bun filled with sweet bean jam. The result resembles a chestnut. Iga-manju buns are a specialty of farming communities in the north of Saitama Prefecture. Besides being an essential food served on celebratory occasions, they were commonly given to children as an afternoon snack.

Chiba

Map No.12

Kanto



Illustrated sushi

Futomaki-zushi | Thick-rolled sushi

Vinegared sushi rice is rolled up in sheets of nori (laver seaweed) with a variety of fillings, such as kanpyo (strips of seasoned gourd), shiitake mushroom, carrot, spinach, and pickles. These are arranged in such a way that the cross-section forms a pattern, such as a flower or animal, when the sushi roll is sliced. Traditionally, futomaki-zushi was prepared for auspicious occasions or ceremonial events, such as Coming of Age Day, weddings and funerals.

Chiba

Map No. 12

Kanto



Sesame sardines

*Iwashi-no-gomazuke**Sardines pickled with sesame*

A dish that developed out of a method for preserving fish using cooked rice. This was traditional in the Kujukuri district. After cleaning and removing the heads, the sardines are salted and then packed with a generous amount of sesame, ginger root, and yuzu citron. Plenty of vinegar is poured over the mix, to ensure the fish is well pickled.

Tokyo

Map No. 13

Kanto



King of fish?

*Kusaya**Stinky fish*

A specialty of the Izu islands, south of Tokyo. If durian is the king of fruit, then kusaya just has to be the king of fish. Because it stinks. Also, much like durian, it is an acquired taste. Mackerel scad or flying fish are pickled in vats of brine, then dried in the sun. The result is regarded by aficionados as a perfect match for sake or shochu on a sultry summer evening in the islands.

Tokyo

Map No. 13

Kanto



Deep-fried clams on rice

*Fukagawa-don**Rice bowl with clams*

Before the shoreline of Tokyo Bay was reclaimed, short-neck clams (asari) and hard clams (hamaguri) used to be abundant around the mouth of the river Fukagawa. During the Edo Period, local fishermen came up with the recipe for this dish: the clams are deep-fried, then blended with scallions and seasoned with miso, and this mix is served over hot rice. Because these shellfish were readily available and easily affordable, this was an important source of nutrition for the townspeople.

Kanagawa

Map No. 14

Kanto



Festive sweet dumplings

*Herahera-dango**Herahera dumplings*

Wheat flour is mixed with sticky rice flour (shiratama-ko), water is added and the resulting dough is kneaded, formed into dumplings and cooked in hot water. Served with sweet azuki bean jam, these herahera dumplings have been a festive food since the Edo Period, commonly served in local households on special occasions to pray for abundant catches or for safety in the year ahead.

Kanagawa

Map No. 14

Kanto



Grilled seasonal vegetables

Kanko-yaki*Grilled wild plants*

In the old days, people living in remote mountainous areas were unable to cultivate rice, so they supplemented their diet with the wild plants they gathered—edible herbs and shoots in spring, mushrooms in the autumn, and whatever was in season. These would be wrapped in a wheat dough coating and grilled. Even today, many families still prepare kanko-yaki like this, using wild plants that grow near their homes.

Niigata

Map No. 15

Chubu



Thick vegetable soup

Noppei-jiru*Noppei soup*

Noppei soup can be found in many parts of Japan, but the way it is prepared in Niigata is distinctive. A wide variety of seasonal vegetables are boiled thoroughly, and the soup is thickened with taro yam. Salmon roe (ikura) is sometimes scattered on top. This essential dish for the new year is also served at festivals and other important occasions.

Niigata

Map No. 15

Chubu



Perfect picnic sushi

Sasa-zushi*Sushi wrapped in bamboo leaves*

In the Kubiki district of Niigata, people have traditionally spread a variety of ingredients such as wild plants or river fish on sushi rice, and then bound the mixture in leaves of sasa bamboo. These long leaves are a convenient wrapping material and also have natural antibacterial properties. The vinegar in the sushi rice helps to preserve the food as well, so the sushi keeps well without spoiling. So sasa-zushi is an especially good food for taking on outings.

Toyama

Map No. 16

Chubu



Trout fit for a shogun

Masu-zushi*Trout sushi*

Sasa leaves are spread across the base of a round container and covered with a layer of vinegared rice. On top of this are placed slices of trout that have been salt-pickled and seasoned. The sasa leaves are folded over the top and then a weight is placed on top to press the sushi into a firm "cake." During the Edo Period, the local feudal lord, Maeda Toshioki, presented masu-zushi to the 8th Tokugawa shogun, Yoshimune. It is reported that Yoshimune, a connoisseur of rare delicacies, was highly impressed.

Toyama

Map No. 16

Chubu



The king of winter

Buri-daikon*Yellowtail with
daikon radish*

Since the old days, yellowtail (buri) has been known as the king of the fish of Toyama Bay. Freshly landed, the flavor of this popular fish is at its peak in the winter months. The people of Toyama have developed many ways of preparing it, both raw (as sashimi) and cooked, especially fried in teriyaki style. A local specialty is buri-daikon: the head and cleanings of the fish are placed in a dashi stock seasoned with soy sauce and sugar, and simmered with chunks of daikon radish until they become soft and absorb all the rich flavor of the broth.

Ishikawa

Map No. 17

Chubu



Pickled perfection

Kabura-zushi*Pickled yellowtail
with turnip*

The yellowtail landed in winter from the Sea of Japan is valued for its rich, fatty flavor. A traditional way of preserving it is this fermented preparation. The fish is first salted, cut into fillets, and layered with slices of winter turnip. This is then pickled in vats with koji (the cultured rice from which sake is prepared). During the Edo Period, this was a popular winter delicacy prepared by many households, especially in Kanazawa.

Ishikawa

Map No. 17

Chubu



Duck delicacy

Jibu-ni*Jibu soup*

Traditionally prepared from wild duck, this is a dish often served as part of the formal kaiseki cuisine of Kanazawa (Kaga ryori). The meat of the duck (or chicken) is simmered in a dashi stock along with pieces of wheat gluten (fu), mushrooms and vegetables such as bamboo shoots and lotus root, until it forms a thick broth. This dish originated in the villages of the Noto Peninsula and the Kaga mountains, where it was prepared from the migratory fowl caught in winter.

Fukui

Map No. 18

Chubu



Longevity noodles

Echizen oroshi soba*Soba noodles
with grated daikon*

Grated (oroshi) daikon radish has long been considered a healthy, life-prolonging food. In this recipe from the Echizen area of Fukui Prefecture, grated daikon is added to the broth of cooked soba (buckwheat noodles), along with chopped scallions and bonito flakes.

Fukui

Map No.18

Chubu



Fishy snack

*Saba no heshiko**Mackerel preserved
in salt and rice bran*

In Fukui, the winter mackerel are rich and fatty. They are most plentiful from February to early spring. During this season, it is traditional to preserve the fish so they can be eaten year-round. Whole mackerel are opened, cleaned and salted, then packed in rice bran and left to ferment for a year. Pieces of the fish are lightly grilled, often eaten as a snack when drinking sake.

Nagano

Map No.20

Chubu



Handmade heaven

*Shinshu soba**Shinshu soba noodles*

The cold climate and steep terrain of the mountains of Shinshu (Nagano) made it impossible to grow rice. Instead, buckwheat was cultivated and it became a key source of nutrition for local people. Buckwheat noodles (soba) were an essential food served on auspicious occasions, such as festivals or ceremonial events. To this day, the Shinshu region still has a strong tradition of eating hand-made soba noodles.

Yamanashi

Map No.19

Chubu



Hot on vegetables

*Hoto**Hot pot
with udon noodles*

This warming hot pot features a hearty mix of vegetables, such as pumpkin, with freshly made wheat noodles cut rather thicker than regular udon. The vegetables are first cooked in dashi stock; then the noodles are added and boiled until soft. The broth is seasoned with miso. Because fresh noodles are used, they give the broth a thick texture that retains the heat well.

Nagano

Map No.20

Chubu



Farmhouse dumplings

*Oyaki**Grilled dumplings*

To prepare this classic farmhouse snack, vegetables and wild plants are first stir-fried and seasoned with miso or soy sauce. Then small amounts are wrapped in wheat-flour dough, making small, fist-sized dumplings, which are steamed or cooked in a wide pan. In the past they would be buried in the hot ash around the edge of the open hearths found in traditional houses.

Gifu

Map No.21

Chubu



Nutty sweets

Kuri-kinton*Chestnut balls*

These simple snacks of chestnut have been a popular treat since ancient times. The whole nuts are boiled or steamed, and the shells are opened. The soft chestnut inside is seasoned with sugar and a little salt, and formed into a puree. Then, using a cloth, small amounts are gently squeezed to form balls.

Shizuoka

Map No.22

Chubu



Deep-fried mini-shrimp

Sakura-ebi no kaki-age*Shrimp fritters*

Sakura-ebi shrimp are plentiful along the shores of Suruga Bay. These tiny shrimp are mixed in a tempura batter along with chopped scallion greens, then quickly deep-fried to form crisp fritters. This recipe, dating back over 100 years, used to be made only when the shrimp were freshly caught and sweet. These days they can be preserved, so kaki-age are prepared throughout the year.

Gifu

Map No.21

Chubu



Tasty paste

Hoba miso*Ho leaf miso*

The large leaves of the ho tree (a type of magnolia) have antibacterial properties, and in this area are used to wrap portions of sushi or mochi rice cakes. Dried, the leaves are used to prepare hoba miso. Savory miso paste is mixed with leek, shiitake mushroom, pickles, or other ingredients, placed on a dried leaf, then heated over a charcoal fire. This custom originated as a way to thaw out pickles that were frozen solid in the depth of winter.

Shizuoka

Map No.22

Chubu



Lean eel

Unagi no kabayaki*Broiled and seasoned eel*

Lake Hamana is renowned throughout the country as a source of freshwater eel. In Shizuoka, the eels are cleaned and boned, then grilled and seasoned with a soy-based sauce. This differs from the preparation in eastern Japan, where fatter eels are used, and they are steamed before being grilled, which makes the flesh softer.

Aichi

Map No.23

Chubu



Grilled eel and rice

*Hitsu-mabushi**Eel in a tub*

The eel is grilled without being steamed first. Then it is cut into fine slices and mixed with cooked rice in a wooden serving tub (hitsu). This can be eaten in three different ways: just as it is; seasoned with scallions and wasabi; and finally with hot green tea poured over it (cha-zuke).

Mie

Map No.24

Kansai



Pilgrim's choice

*Ise udon**Ise-style udon noodles*

This recipe for cooking udon (wheat noodles) originated in a restaurant serving pilgrims who came to worship at the Shinto shrines of Ise. The thick, firm noodles are cooked until they are tender, then served in a dark, rich, slightly sweetened broth prepared from bonito flakes and sardines, and seasoned with tamari soy sauce. The usual condiment is finely chopped scallions.

Aichi

Map No.23

Chubu



Hearty miso stew

*Miso-nikomi udon**Noodles in miso broth*

This hearty winter dish is prepared with the dark soybean miso that is a specialty of Nagoya and the surrounding region. The miso is diluted in a rich dashi stock prepared from bonito flakes, and placed in a wide, earthenware hot pot. Firm, chewy udon wheat noodles are cooked in this savory broth, along with chunks of chicken, deep-fried tofu, and leeks, then slowly simmered. To add extra nutrition, a raw egg is cracked into the piping-hot stew toward the end of cooking.

Mie

Map No.24

Kansai



Fisherman's sushi

*Tekone-zushi**Strewn sushi*

Cuts of red-meat fish, such as skipjack tuna or bluefin, are placed in a soy-flavored marinade, then arranged on top of vinegared rice. This is garnished to taste with slivers of green shiso leaf, ginger root or nori seaweed. According to legend, this style of sushi was invented by local fishermen, as it could be prepared and eaten without interrupting their work while fishing for skipjack tuna.

Shiga

Map No.25

Kansai



Forerunner of sushi

Funa-zushi

Preserved carp

This specialty of Lake Biwa is prepared from crucian carp that are fat with roe. The fish are cleaned (apart from the ovaries) and salted and left for at least a month, or as long as a year. The body cavities are then filled with a mixture of cooked rice and salt, packed into a vat and left to pickle for several months. The sour flavor of this preparation is considered the origin of modern-day sushi, which is made with vinegared rice.

Kyoto

Map No.26

Kansai



Pick the perfect pickle

Kyo tsukemono

Kyoto pickles

Kyoto pickles are not so salty, bringing out the natural flavor of the vegetables. They are carefully prepared, taking into consideration specific combinations of tastes and colors. A popular style is senmai-zuke ("thousand-layer pickle"), which is made with thin slices of shogoin kabura, an extremely large turnip. Another variety is shiba-zuke, a pickle of chopped eggplant and myoga ginger, prepared with red shiso and salt.

Shiga

Map No.25

Kansai



Delicious duck

Kamo nabe

Duck hot pot

As winter arrives, migratory waterfowl arrive at Lake Biwa from Siberia. After their long journey, the birds are lean but soon fatten up to protect themselves from the winter cold. The meat of the ducks has a good texture and a sweet fattiness. A popular recipe in this area is a hot pot of duck meat cooked with tofu and leeks, Chinese cabbage, and other vegetables.

Kyoto

Map No.26

Kansai



Eggplant excellence

Kamonasu no dengaku

Broiled eggplant with miso

Kamonasu eggplants are a popular summer-time vegetable in Kyoto. They have an attractive appearance and fine flavor, with a firm but delicate texture that does not fall apart when it is cooked. To prepare dengaku, the eggplant is cut into half lengthways and slowly broiled over charcoal. When it is almost ready, it is slathered with a sweet miso dressing and broiled a while longer.

Osaka

Map No.27

Kansai



Super slices of sushi cake

Hako-zushi*Boxed sushi*

Also known as oshi-zushi (pressed sushi) or Osaka-zushi, the name derives from the way it is made: the vinegared rice is packed into a square wooden mold, topped with shrimp, fish, or other kinds of seafood, and pressed down to form a firm "cake" of sushi, which is served in slices. Because the process is rather laborious, fewer shops prepare it these days, but it remains popular as a specialty of the Osaka region.

Hyogo

Map No.28

Kansai



Wild boar fit to feed an army

Botan nabe*"Peony" hot pot*

Because of its bright red color, wild boar meat came to be known by the poetic euphemism "peony" (botan). The boar meat, finely sliced, would be arranged in a flower shape on a platter, together with Chinese cabbage, carrot, burdock root, and mushrooms, before being cooked in a hot pot seasoned with miso. Wild boar hot pot made with miso was a dish prepared for infantry regiments during the Meiji era.

Osaka

Map No.27

Kansai



Magnificent mochi soup

Shiromiso zoni*White miso soup with mochi*

Each region of Japan has its own way to make zoni, a soup served over mochi (pounded sticky-rice cakes). In the Osaka and Kyoto area, it is traditional to use spherical mochi cakes, and to season the soup with white miso. Thinly sliced vegetables are also added, such as daikon radish and carrot. These are cut in a circular shape, because this is believed to ensure harmony.

Hyogo

Map No.28

Kansai



Nails that hit the spot

Ikanago no kugi-ni*Cooked sand eel "nails"*

Young sand eels caught in February or March are cooked with a seasoning of soy sauce, mirin, sugar, and ginger. The baby fish were thought to resemble bent nails, and that's how the dish acquired its name.

Nara

Map No.29

Kansai



Rice and mackerel masterpiece

Kaki-no-ha-zushi | Persimmon leaf sushi

This is a form of pressed sushi made with slices of mackerel. The bite-sized portions are wrapped in persimmon leaves, which have a very strong antibacterial effect. Both the fish (mackerel) and the rice are considered delicacies. This dish was prepared for ceremonies in the Yoshino area, such as the summer festival and the annual opening of the river to boat traffic.

Wakayama

Map No.30

Kansai



Traditional picnic lunch

Mehari-zushi | Leaf-wrapped "sushi"

Leaves of takana (mustard greens) are briefly salt-pickled, rinsed, and marinated in a mixture of soy sauce and mirin. The leaves are used to wrap balls of cooked rice. These were popular in the old days as an easy-to-carry lunch for people working in forest or field, and were often made in very large sizes.

Nara

Map No.29

Kansai



Super-slender snow-white noodles

Miwa somen | Miwa somen noodles

Originally known as muginawa ("wheat strings"), noodles have been produced for more than 1,200 years in the Miwa area (present-day Sakurai City). High-quality wheat flour is made into dough, then stretched to form noodles no more than 1 mm thick. In winter, the snow-white noodles can be seen drying outside on special racks in the cold, dry air.

Tottori

Map No.31

Chugoku



Fine crab—and you won't feel the pinch

Kani-jiru | Crabmeat soup

Freshly caught snow crabs are cleaned, cut in half, and boiled together with shredded daikon radish. Miso is added as a seasoning. Because this dish is quite affordable it is prepared by many households, and considered one of the finest seasonal dishes of the region.

Tottori

Map No.31

Chugoku



Flying fish cylinders

*Ago no yaki**Flying fish grill*

A popular souvenir item in Tottori Prefecture. From May to July, flying fish (ago) migrate along the San-in coast to spawn, and are caught by traditional fishing methods. The meat of the fish is pounded, formed into cylindrical shapes, and steamed to make a kind of chikuwa fish paste.

Shimane

Map No.32

Chugoku



Tasty clam cuisine

*Shijimi-jiru**Fresh-water clam soup*

Large, black shijimi clams from Lake Shinji produce a tasty broth. The clams are left in fresh water to remove the grit, then brought to a boil and seasoned to taste with soy sauce or miso.

Shimane

Map No.32

Chugoku



Soba with the sauce on

*Izumo soba**Izumo-style
soba noodles*

The buckwheat noodles made in the Izumo area are firm and dark, with a distinctive flavor. They are made from buckwheat flour finely ground in stone mills, with only a very small amount of wheat flour added. Unlike other parts of the country where the cold noodles are dipped into a soy-based sauce before they are eaten, Izumo soba is eaten from small bowls with the sauce poured over them.

Okayama

Map No.33

Chugoku



Sushi as a work of art

*Bara-zushi**Strewn sushi*

Okayama's best-known dish looks as good as it tastes. Cuts of fresh seafood and a variety of seasonal vegetables are artfully scattered across a wide platter of vinegared sushi rice. This is decorated with shreds of omelet, sprigs of green sansho pepper leaves, and slivers of pickled ginger. An essential food at parties and ceremonial banquets.

Okayama

Map No.33

Chugoku



These fish are just too good!

Mamakari-zushi*Shad sushi*

Mamakari is the local term for a species of shad caught in the Seto Inland Sea. This name is said to originate from words in the local dialect for rice ("mama") and borrow ("kari"): the fish are so delicious as a side dish that you have to go your neighbor to borrow more rice. This fish is often pickled in vinegar or served on vinegared sushi rice.

Hiroshima

Map No.34

Chugoku



Lunchbox conger

Anago meshi*Rice with conger eel*

After deboning the eel, the head and spine are simmered to produce a stock, which is seasoned with soy sauce and used for cooking rice. The fillets of conger are broiled, using a thick, sweetened soy-based basting sauce. This recipe originated among fishermen on the Seto Inland Sea. The popularity of anago meshi spread after it began to be sold in boxed lunches at stations along the Sanyo railway line.

Hiroshima

Map No.34

Chugoku



Outstanding oyster dish

Kaki no dote nabe*Oyster hot pot with miso*

Hiroshima is Japan's top oyster producer, a tradition that dates back around 450 years. A popular way to serve them in winter is this nourishing hot pot. A thin layer of miso is spread around the inside of the casserole. The oysters are cooked with tofu and vegetables, and when they're ready the flavor of the broth is adjusted by stirring in the miso to taste.

Yamaguchi

Map No.35

Chugoku



See-through pufferfish

Fuku (fugu) ryori*Pufferfish dishes*

Pufferfish bones have been excavated from shell mounds in the Yamaguchi region dating back more than 3,000 years. The fish are prepared in many ways, including as sashimi, in hot pots, and in rice porridge. When served as sashimi, the fish is sliced so thinly that the pattern on the serving platter underneath is still visible. The raw fish is eaten with a soy sauce dip, seasoned with fine-chopped scallions, grated radish with red chili, and daidai (sour orange) juice.