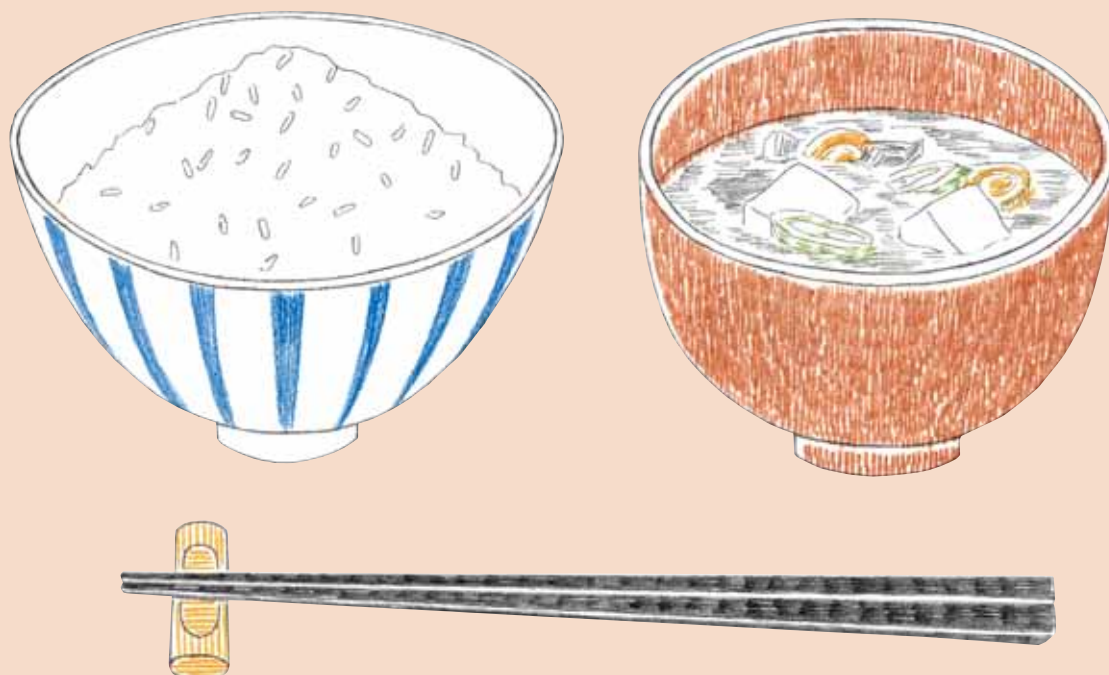


WASHOKU

和 食

Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese

Itadaki-masu



MAFF

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



WASHOKU - cultures that should be preserved

What exactly is WASHOKU? Maybe even Japanese people haven’t thought seriously about it very much. Typical washoku at home is usually comprised of cooked rice, miso soup, some main and side dishes and pickles. A set menu of grilled fish at a downtown diner is also a type of washoku. Recipes using cooked rice as the main ingredient such as curry and rice or sushi should also be considered as a type of washoku. Of course, washoku includes some noodle and mochi dishes. The world of traditional washoku is extensive.

In the first place, the term WASHOKU does not refer solely to a dish or a cuisine. For instance, let’s take a look at *osechi-ryori*, a set of traditional dishes for New Year. The dishes are prepared to celebrate the coming of the new year, and with a wish to be able to spend the coming year soundly and happily. In other words, the religion and the mindset of Japanese people are expressed in *osechi-ryori*, *otoso* (rice wine for New Year) and *ozohni* (soup with *mochi*), as well as the ambience of the people sitting around the table with these dishes.

Food culture has been developed with the background of the natural environment surrounding people and culture that is unique to the country or the region.

The Japanese archipelago runs widely north and south, surrounded by sea. 75% of the national land is mountainous areas. Under the monsoonal climate, the four seasons show distinct differences. The average annual precipitation is as high as 1800mm. In such natural environment, the people are obtaining the wealth of seasonal foodstuff from the sea, mountains and fields. Japanese people respect and live with nature, which brings such blessings to people’s lives. With belief in deities and ancestors, combined with foods, a unique food culture has been developed in this land.

Food culture in Japan has been developed by also incorporating foreign cultures from China, Korean Peninsula and Southeast Asia, and from West European countries in the modern era. As a result, delicious and healthy WASHOKU that Japan can boast to the world developed.

However, such tradition of WASHOKU is now disappearing from Japanese tables. While WASHOKU had been developed by using foodstuff grown in Japan, the food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan is now lower than 40%. Household consumption of rice is decreasing, and traditional local cuisines and dishes specially prepared for certain events are also disappearing.

In its long history, Japan has developed WASHOKU as something beyond mere cuisine but culture. Let us explore the history of WASHOKU, the traditional food culture in Japan, in this booklet.

WASHOKU

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* In this booklet, the traditional food culture of Japan is expressed as WASHOKU, and dishes with such tradition are expressed as washoku.

Foodstuff



Dishes



Nutrition



Hospitality



Foodstuff used in WASHOKU includes grains (mainly rice), vegetables, mushrooms, fish, shellfish and seaweed. Delicious wagyu beef is also used in recent years. There are two types of rice: non-glutinous rice and glutinous rice. The variety of vegetables ranges widely from indigenous varieties to Western vegetables that arrived in the Meiji period and thereafter. Fish is also an abundant foodstuff, and there are as many as about 4,200 varieties of fish around Japan.

The basic structure of WASHOKU is “one soup and three dishes other than cooked rice.” Such structure comprises dishes that take full advantage of the deliciousness of the ingredients themselves. The key for every dish is *dashi* (stock). It may be prepared from *kombu* (dried kelp) or *katsuobushi* (dried bonito), or by cooking ingredients for a certain time. Deliciously prepared dishes are served in beautiful style.

Traditional *washoku* that is low in animal fat ensures the necessary energy for living and an ideal nutritional balance for healthy life, including staple food and side dishes. Eating the main staple food and side dishes alternately, harmonizing the tastes within one's mouth, is a unique style of eating for washoku. By prioritizing umami, salt content and calories can be effectively controlled.

Motenashi, the Japanese concept of hospitality, is not merely a service offered from the host to the guest. It also includes the entire attitude of people who eat at the table. For example, the hospitality of the host expressed in the decoration of the space for eating, or various ideas incorporated in dishes and plates, will be rewarded when the guests notice them. Precisely, WASHOKU is the representative culture of Japan.

What is WASHOKU?

Foodstuff, dishes, nutrients and hospitality; the occasion and style of eating are also important elements of WASHOKU

WASHOKU starts from selecting foodstuff. Then, the menu is composed by taking nutrition into consideration. Then, the dishes are served with a mind of hospitality. How to eat the dishes is also an important element.

WASHOKU We use the term as a word expressing Japanese-style cuisine.

However, does the term WASHOKU merely represent a single style of cuisine?

For example, “*itadaki-masu*” and “*gochisou-sama*,” the phrases Japanese people say before and after meals, respectively, express thanks to not only the person who prepared the meal, but also to nature in which the foodstuff was grown, and to our ancestors and deities who preserved such nature.

Also, we pay attention not only to the dishes prepared but also the cooking method, the menu structure, plates and bowls used, and how the dishes are served on the table and how they are eaten. These also reflect the feeling and style unique to Japanese people.

In such context, WASHOKU refers not only to cuisine, but also to Japanese customs related to eating.

All tangible and intangible assets, including the wisdom and customs of eating that were generated and built by Japanese people, or the people who created such assets, are included in the concept of WASHOKU. Let's recognize

the word as a collective term for the traditional dietary cultures of Japan.

WASHOKU is constantly changing over time.

The basic structure of WASHOKU is “one soup and three dishes,” which means eating cooked rice with side dishes, soup and pickles. This is a style developed to eat rice, the staple food, deliciously. It also generated the characteristic style of combining cooked rice and other dishes and tasting them at the same time in the mouth.

While WASHOKU had been inherited based on this style, it has been actively incorporating foodstuff, recipes and cooking methods from abroad and has been changing its content.

With the active introduction of Western culture in the Meiji period, WASHOKU experienced a further change. The taboo against eating meat was dissolved, resulting in the invention of various Western-style Japanese dishes such as *nikujaga* (stewed potatoes and meat seasoned with soy sauce), *sukiyaki*, *curry*

and rice and *tonkatsu* (Japanese-style cutlet). These are some of the new traditions of WASHOKU.

Nowadays, the dietary life of Japanese people is changing at an unprecedented speed. The style of cuisine has diversified through changes such as westernization, while handing down the culture of WASHOKU is diminishing due to an increase of people who are indifferent to what they eat, or a decrease of occasions for cooking and eating at home.

For this reason, it may be the time for us to reconsider what WASHOKU is.

What are the four elements comprising WASHOKU?

Now, what elements comprise WASHOKU?

The first is foodstuff. In Japan, the four seasons are distinctive, and the climate is temperate and rainy. Agricultural products harvested in such climate are wide in variety, including rice, vegetables, edible wild plants and mushrooms.

Japan is also surrounded by productive fishing ground, where the Japan Current and the *Oyashio* Current collide. An abundant variety of fish is hauled from sea, and various local fish-eating cultures were developed. While 90% of fishery yields in Norway, which is also a major fisheries country, comprises only eight varieties of fish, that of Japan comprises as many as 28 varieties. This fact shows how abundant the variety of fish in Japan is. The annual

consumption volume of fish is about 57kg per person, which is about twice that of the U.S. and 6th in the world. It shows that the blessings from the sea are important foodstuff for washoku.

The second element is dishes. Cooking methods capitalizing on abundant water resources such as steaming, boiling and stewing, cooking utensils such as Japanese kitchen knives that are suitable for processing various types of fish, and *dashi* stock improved so as to prepare delicious meals mainly using vegetables and seafood, are the pillars of WASHOKU dishes.

The third is nutrition. *Washoku* is relatively low-calorie and allows the easy intake of different nutrients in a well-balanced manner.

And the fourth is hospitality. The mindset of greeting guests with utmost care is not merely a service for guests. By tasting the dishes and appreciating the decorations of alcoves or tableware used, the guests also reward the host. “*Itadaki-masu*” and “*gochisou-sama*” are both words of thanks before and after eating, respectively, and it also makes those offering the hospitality feel satisfied as well.

The manner of using chopsticks, the people's behavior, decoration that expresses the season and feeling, and the attitude of appreciating them...the idea of understanding the manners and the intention of preparing the eating place, and the feeling of caring for one another, is the spirit of WASHOKU.

Living with nature: “Aenokoto” in Oku-Noto



The reason why

WASHOKU, developed in life with nature, is a part of Japanese culture

Japanese people lived with nature that shows different aspects by region and by season, and developed various different styles of dietary culture.

Let us look for the reason why WASHOKU is a part of the culture.

Nature not only brings blessings, but also shows harshness to people. The lifestyle of Japanese people used to be deeply linked to nature, by accepting the environment in terms of geography or climate.

1. Spiritual nature of WASHOKU

Back in the days when science and technology were not developed as is now, nature existed overwhelmingly over humans. People felt the existence of deities in such nature, and prayed for large hauls and good harvests. The joy and thankfulness of harvests developed into the form of festivals. The lifestyle nurtured the spiritual nature of respecting nature that brings blessings in the form of food.

2. Social nature of WASHOKU

Everyday household tables, celebrations, festivals and annual functions in the communities of villages and towns-WASHOKU has been inherited by

The tradition of “Aenokoto” is inherited in the Oku-Noto Region of Ishikawa Prefecture (such as Wajima City, Suzu City, Anamizu Town and Noto Town). The ritual invites the deities of rice paddies inside the house, and lets them stay there from December to the next February until the coming of spring. The deities of rice paddies are husband and wife. Therefore, the tradition prepares two sets of utensils used for the ceremony, including divine tables with dishes, goblets and chopsticks. People welcome the deities with the foodstuff harvested in the nearby region. The dishes offered to the deities include rice cooked with adzuki beans, cod soup, daikon radish, fish and *amazake* (sweet fermented rice wine). These dishes are given to children after the ceremony. It is one of the Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties designated by the Japanese government, and is also included in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

people eating the blessings of nature together. WASHOKU plays the role of the cornerstone of society, through family get-togethers, community gatherings and other parties.

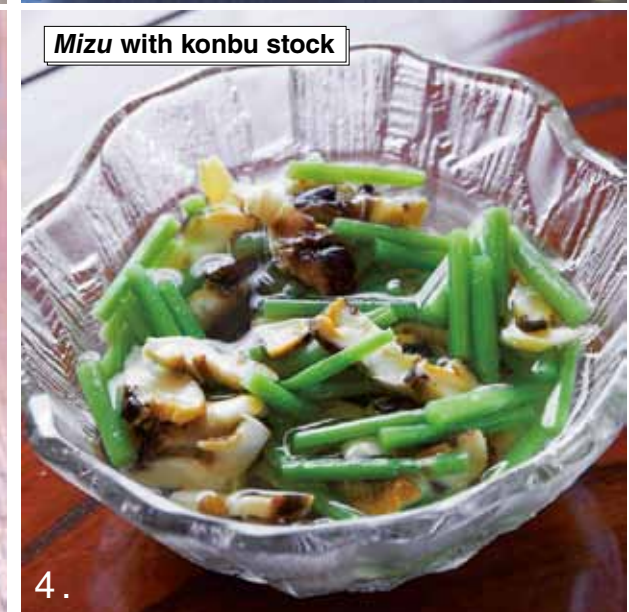
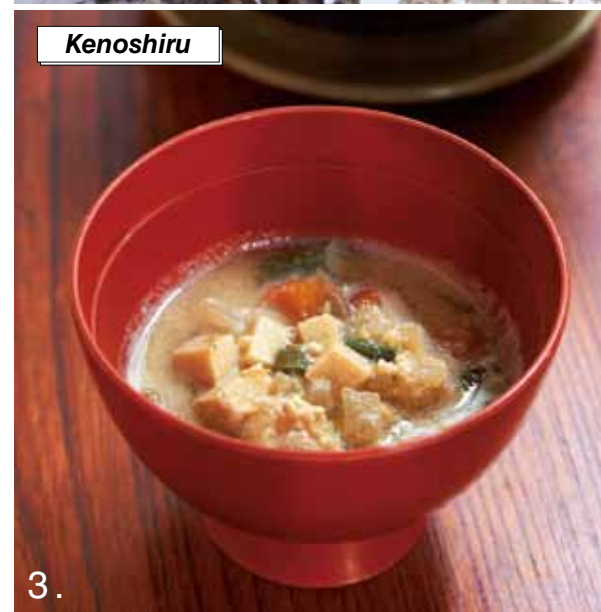
3. Functional nature of WASHOKU

Naturally, food also has the functional nature of providing the stuff of people's life. WASHOKU, which uses abundant natural blessings such as rice, vegetables, seafood and seaweed, also represents a healthy dietary culture with amazing nutritional balance. In addition, the dishes for celebration also have the “function” of wishing for health and longevity.

4. The regional nature of WASHOKU

WASHOKU differs widely among regions. Because geography and climate

Living with nature: In the case of Aomori Prefecture



1. Spiritual nature

In this region, the entire family cooperates to make “winter-dried daikon radish” for a whole winter. Daikon radish is boiled, immersed in clear icy water, and then dried in cold winter wind. The process is the wisdom of life developed with the spirit of living with nature, capitalizing on the cold weather, rather than trying to resist the cold winters.

2. Social nature

In Sai Village, located at the tip of Shimokita Peninsula and with a population of about 2,500, holds the Yanomemori Hachimangu Festival every September. During the three days of the festival, all houses keep the doors open, and welcome any guests and have drinks together. Deities visits all the places in the village during these three days, and people share the table and strengthen the bonds among them.

3. Functional nature

Kenoshiru is a soup in the Tsugaru region that is prepared for the 15th of January as another new year's celebration, as a replacement of *nanakusa-gayu* (rice porridge with seven spring herbs) in other regions. Because the common spring herbs cannot be harvested in Aomori in winter, the dish uses root vegetables such as daikon radish and carrots, edible wild plants such as *warabi* and *zenmai*, and preserved foods such as freeze-dried tofu, to brighten up the New Year table in the harsh winter. The dish is prepared with the wish for maintaining health and soundness.

4. Regional nature

Mizu is a type of edible wild plant growing throughout the Tohoku Region. This dish is prepared by boiling *mizu* to remove scum, and immersing it in *konbu* stock together with steamed horned turban. It is interesting that blessings from the mountain and sea coexist in a single dish. It is a traditional dish for the Nishi-Tsugaru Region, where the distance of the sea and mountain is close, which combines the wealth of both mountain and sea in the same dish.

varies widely throughout Japan, much-diversified dietary culture had been developed among different regions. From Hokkaido to Okinawa, each region supplied the needs within the region, and was developing original dietary culture up to the early modern period. In other words, WASHOKU is the symbol of regional culture in Japan.

Let us take a look at “Aenokoto,” a ritual inherited in Oku-Noto, Ishikawa Prefecture. This is an agricultural rite to thank the deities of rice paddies for the harvest of the year.

“Ae” means “hospitality,” and “koto” means “festival.” From winter to spring, the deities of rice paddies are invited and welcomed into the house. Abundant blessings from the mountain, sea and fields of Noto Region are offered to the

deities.

Another example is the dietary culture in Sai Village located in Shimokita Peninsula of Aomori Prefecture.

The dietary habit of using many preserved foods made of vegetables and edible wild plants was developed, and the tradition has been well-preserved until now, with the unique traditional dishes being inherited. *Osechi-ryori* (new year dishes) unique to the region is enjoyed at New Year's, wishing for health and soundness.

These examples show that a lifestyle of living with nature developed unique dishes and dietary habits in different regions in Japan, making up WASHOKU.

(1) Respect for nature

WASHOKU started from respecting nature and has continued to the present.

WASHOKU, supported by plentiful nature, especially clear water, blessed with rich foodstuff, and methods of cooking, utensils, and arrangement were developed. That is why WASHOKU allows us to feel the seasons and reminds us of respecting nature.

Somei No Ido in Nashi No Ki Jinja Shrine in Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto City, is a spring that is familiarly known to local residents for its good-quality water. In every region in Japan, people were blessed not only with river water but also water from springs and wells, and lived thanks to such water.



Tofu



Fukiyose



Wanmono



Wasabi

Tofu || (Utilizing good-quality water)

Tofu, a food solidifying soy bean curd with a coagulating agent, has been widely eaten from ancient times. Tofu made in Japan is unique with its high content of water and softness. Because it is a bland-tasting food, the taste depends largely on the good quality of water used in the preparation process.

Fukiyose || (Expressing seasonal feelings)

WASHOKU takes in the feelings of the season in various styles. The dish called *fukiyose* expresses a scene in autumn where seasonal vegetables, ginkgo nuts and mushrooms all drift with wind inside a basket works.

Wanmono || (Using wood materials)

Soups are usually served in wooden bowls. Lacquerware made by wrapping cloths over a thinly-carved wooden core and finished with lacquer has been used throughout Japan. Because it is made of wood, it can be held in the hand without feeling the heat even if it contains boiling-hot soup inside.

Wasabi || (Functionality of nature)

Wasabi is a familiar relish for sashimi. Its stinging spiciness is caused by a volatile chemical substance called allyl isothiocyanate, which has strong antibacterial and sterilizing activities. Therefore, it is effectively used when eating raw fish. It is wisdom peculiar to WASHOKU, fully utilizing the efficacy of natural products.

In Japan, where people are blessed with rich products of nature, a mentality to worship and respect nature has been developed from ancient days. Festivals to wish for good harvests and large hauls for each season held throughout Japan express such mentality.

Spring, summer, autumn and winter – the four seasons in Japan are so uniquely distinguished in a way that is almost unseen in other places in the world. Washoku takes in various foodstuff that can only be enjoyed for the season.

The plates and bowls to serve the dishes are also quite unique. Lacquerware, using natural lacquer resin, is tableware invented with the knowledge of nature held by our ancestors, realizing beauty and a high mothproof effect and durability.

It is also characteristic that the season can also be felt with the eyes, such as expressing the season with plates and bowls or with garnishes, or decorating flowers of the season in an alcove.

In addition, one of the important blessings of nature is water.

Mellow soft water has large influence

Water is also an object to be religiously worshipped, and has played an important role in formulating food culture in Japan.

The average annual precipitation in Japan is as high as 1800mm. Water suitable for drinking is abundant, and also the water contains less minerals because it stays only for a short period underground. Thus, in contrast to hard water found in continents such as Europe, the water in Japan is soft water (WHO

standards: the content of calcium and magnesium is 120mg/L or less), which has a large impact on WASHOKU.

Cooking methods using mild-tasting and mellow soft water abundantly, and dishes accentuating the natural taste of the foodstuff itself, were developed.

One example is Tofu. Because *momen* or *kinu* tofu generally eaten in Japan is made by using a lot of water, the taste of the product depends largely on the quality of water.

It is the same with cooking rice. By rinsing rice several times with water, and by cooking with an adequate amount of water, the rice can be finished softly and without any hard core inside.

Other cooking methods using water abundantly, such as boiling vegetables and rinsing with water thereafter, removing scum with water, or firming the surface of soba noodles with cold water after boiling, are all quite unique and different from methods seen in other regions of the world. The good quality of water in Japan supports WASHOKU.

Also, soft water brings out the taste of *kombu* and *katsuoobushi* effectively, which resulted in a cooking method that uses *dashi* stock. With the use of *dashi* stock, the unique taste of ingredients themselves, which are the blessings of nature, can be enjoyed.

Sensitivity to the changes of seasons lies within the spirit of WASHOKU. In other words, WASHOKU or food for Japanese people, developing emotions towards the four seasons from childhood, is precisely the expression of respect for nature.

(2) Uniting family and region

Gathering to connect ties among people; role of foods for events and festivals

People strengthen ties among them by eating together. Family get-togethers, celebrations, festivals of the region, annual events... Food plays a central role in uniting people within the traditional culture of Japan.

(Table for family)

The occasion for family members and relatives to enjoy *osechi-ryori* at New Year's at the same table is an ideal situation for handing down food tradition of the region or family to the next generation. The photo below is a scene in Fukaura Town, located on the coast of the Sea of Japan in the western part of Aomori Prefecture. The "Fukaura Committee for Local Production and Local Consumption" is acting for several families to gather and teach local dishes inherited in the region to one another. The generation of grandparents tries to hand down the local tradition to the next generation by presenting dishes that only they know how to prepare.



Daily occasions of family members and relatives sitting around the table is an important situation for communication. By all the members showing up at the table and talking about what they felt or what happened each day while having meals, the bond of the family is strengthened. It is an important opportunity to teach children the manner of WASHOKU such as how to use chopsticks or how to hold bowls, or taste sensation and nutritional balance can be educated through dishes.

Aside from daily occasions, special dishes are enjoyed at annual events such as New Year, *setsubun* (the day before the calendric beginning of spring), and New Year's Eve. Such custom is also useful for strengthening ties among family members and relatives. It also results in handing down the taste and tradition of the family to the next generation.

Being connected with people and region through foods

Other than family events, there are also annual events that unite the local community.

Food is also an important factor for festivals of local community. After rites at shrines, there is an eating and drinking ceremony called *naorai*. It is expected that the deities and people unite and people are blessed, by eating and drinking the food and wine offered to the deities. Nowadays, the ceremony also has the meaning of a party after the rite, and people drink together after the rite is carried out. This works to develop familiar feelings and reinforce the awareness as the same community.

Such parties can also be said to be a part of Japanese culture in terms of food.

There are also situations where the local community is united through the intermediary of foods, other than festivals. For example, *imoni-kai* (taro-cooking gathering) held frequently in Yamagata and Miyagi Prefectures in autumn is a

seasonal event where friends, colleagues or members of the local community are invited and gather at riverside. The pot-dish served on the occasion generally contains ingredients such as taro and beef and is seasoned with soy sauce in the inland parts of Yamagata Prefecture. On the other hand, in Miyagi Prefecture, taro and pork are cooked and seasoned with miso. Although there are such regional differences, there are common factors that people gather around a dish cooking regional foodstuff of the season in a large pot. It is suggested that exchange and the feeling of unity are strengthened not only by eating together but also by preparing the dish together.

The bonds of family, relatives, region and community are strengthened through foods. This is one of the characteristics of WASHOKU, its social nature.

(Foods for regional community and festivals)

Sharing the table as a part of rite is an important occasion for people who implement the festival to reinforce the ties among them. The photo below shows the table at a festival in Osaka Prefecture. Dishes served here included a pot dish of *hamo* (conger pike) and *matsutake* mushroom, and local eggplant pickles. On the other hand, *imoni-kai* (photos right) held frequently in Miyagi and Yamagata Prefectures in the Tohoku region in autumn is usually held not only by the regional community but also among colleagues, relatives and friends. By all participants bringing foodstuff and preparing the dish together, the feeling of togetherness is reinforced.



(3) Wish for health and longevity

Wish for health and longevity with dishes for special occasions

For example, *osechi-ryori* preserves the unique culture of different regions throughout Japan. While the content varies widely among different regions, the wish for health and longevity is expressed in every region by eating the dishes.

There are special ceremonial days in the life of Japanese people. One is an annual event as New Year, and another is milestone days in a person's life such as childbirth, coming-of-age, marriage or *kanreki* (60th birthday), which are called rites of passage. There is one thing in common in these special days: people eat special dishes to expel evil spirits, bad luck and disasters, and wish for health and longevity.

On New Year's Day, people celebrate the start of the year by welcoming the "deity of the year" to each household. It is an important annual event that takes place only once a year. *Kadomatsu*, which is a decoration set at the entrance of the house, is a mark for inviting the deities. On New Year's Day, family members gather and have meals together, wishing for happiness throughout the year. *Osechi-ryori* dishes are served on that occasion. *Osechi-ryori* dishes vary widely among regions: some include a



Osechi-ryori

The content of *osechi-ryori* varies among different regions. The above is a sample of *osechi-ryori* in Tokyo. The tier of food boxes (at the front) contains the three dishes for celebration, namely *kuromame* (sweet cooked black soybean), *kazunoko* (herring roe) and *tazukuri* (dried small sardines), which represent wishes for health, for the prosperity of descendants, and for good harvest, respectively. Other dishes for celebration include red-and-white (considered auspicious colors) *kamaboko* (minced and steamed fish), grilled shrimp representing a wish for longevity, and *tataki-gobo* (crushed and seasoned burdock) representing a wish for a good harvest. The content differs by region. A vinegared dish (in the small box at the left) and *nishime* (vegetables cooked with *dashi*) (in large box at rear) are also some popular dishes for *osechi-ryori*.

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 *sekkū* (season-related festivals). These are January 7th ("*jiniitsu*"), when people eat *nanakusa-gayu* (rice porridge with seven spring herbs), March 3rd ("*joushi*"), when people eat *kusamochi* (sweet



Otoso

Otoso, 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. *Otoso* 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).



Okuizome

Okuizome 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.

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.



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 *Saiko* 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.



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.

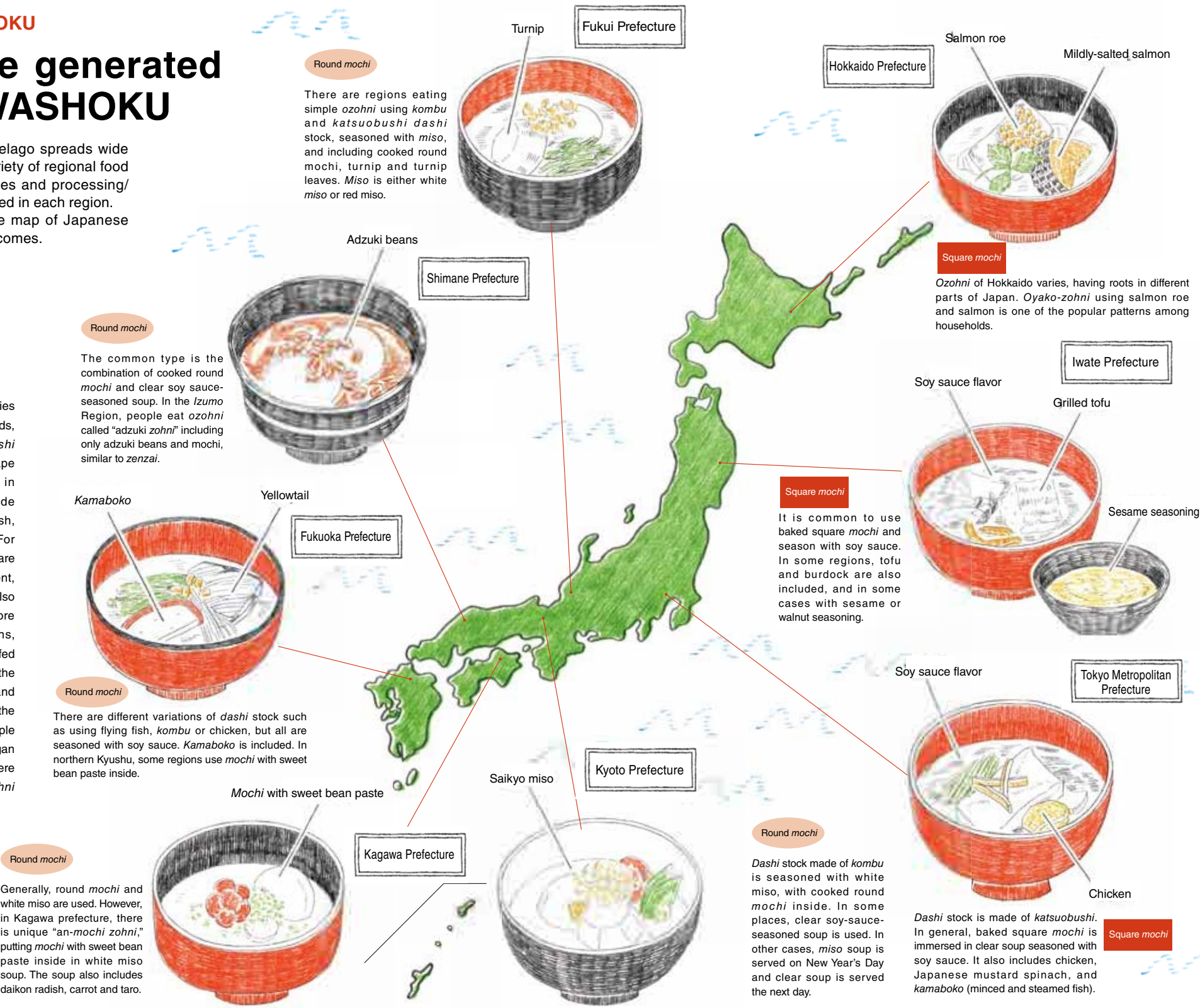
(4) Diversity of WASHOKU

The climate generated diversity, 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*, *katsuobushi*, 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.



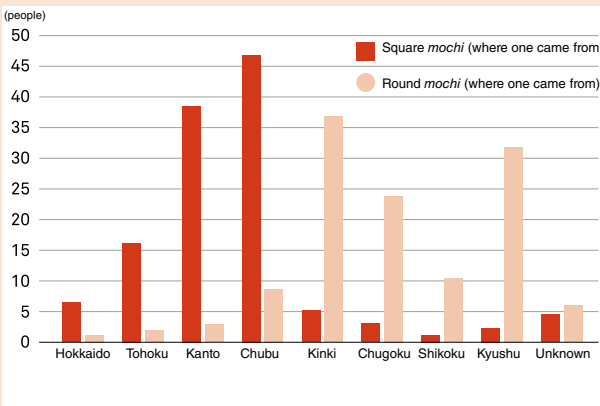
Miso in Japan - Region and characteristics -

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 matured for a long period, and mildly sweet white *miso* using boiled soy bean and matured for a short period.

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

"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.

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 *sauri* 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	Edo period	Azuchi-Momoyama period	Muromachi period	Kamakura period	Heian period	Nara period	Asuka period	Kofun period	Yayoi period	Johmon period
1989-	1945-1989	1926-1945	1912-1926	1869-1912	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

- 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.
- Rice cultivation spread. *Nare-zushi*, made by fermenting fish was invented.
- In the "Gishi Wajin-Dei" 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.
- Mobile furnace made of Haijiki pottery was used.
- Steaming rice by using Haijiki pottery steamer became popular.
- "So," made by boiling down milk, was used as a tribute to the Imperial court.
- Use of chopsticks became widespread.
- *Kentshi* (Japanese missions to Tang China) brought the food culture of the continent.
- In 675, Emperor Tenmu prohibited eating beef, horsemeat, dog and monkey meat, and chicken.
- Preparation method of powdered green tea was brought back from Song China by Eisai.
- Dogen wrote "Tenzo Kyokun" and "Fushuku 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.
- *Honzen ryori*, dishes to welcome guests by samurai, was formulated.
- Professional chefs called "*ouchou-nin*" appeared and formulated their original style.
- Notched mortar widely used.
- Sake-brewing technology progressed.
- Tea ceremony style shifted from *shoin*-style to *wabi*-style.
- Tea ceremony style was completed by Sen no Rikyu.
- *Kaiseki-ryori* style for tea ceremony was established.
- Toyotomi Hideyoshi held the Kitano-dai-sance (prosperous tea gathering).
- Europe entered the Age of Exploration and Western-style sweets and chili pepper arrived in Japan through *Nanban* trade.
- "Ryori Monogatari," the first published book on cuisine in Japan, was issued.
- Eateries and restaurants became widespread in urban areas.
- *Kaiseki-ryori* style enjoying sake served in restaurants was formulated.
- 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.
- *Wagashi* (Japanese sweets) was completed.
- Hand-rolled sushi and tempura became a boom in Edo.
- The ban on eating meat was lifted and eating *gyu-nabe* (similar to sukiyaki) became a boom.
- Books on western cuisine such as "Seiyo Ryori Shihan 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 berberi was actively argued.
- Pork production increased according to the shortage of beef supply.
- Production and development of Western sweets
- 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.
- 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.
- Post-war style of school lunch with milk and bread started.
- Black market emerged throughout Japan.
- Black 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.
- Food self-sufficiency ratio decreased to 39-40%.
- Sales of rebort 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.



Modern meals



Semi-Western dishes become widespread



Eateries such as soba stands becomes popular among the general public



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

It is said that rice arrived in the late Johmon 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 "Fushuku 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

established in this period.

On the other hand, the everyday staple food in Japan was generally *katemeshi*, 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

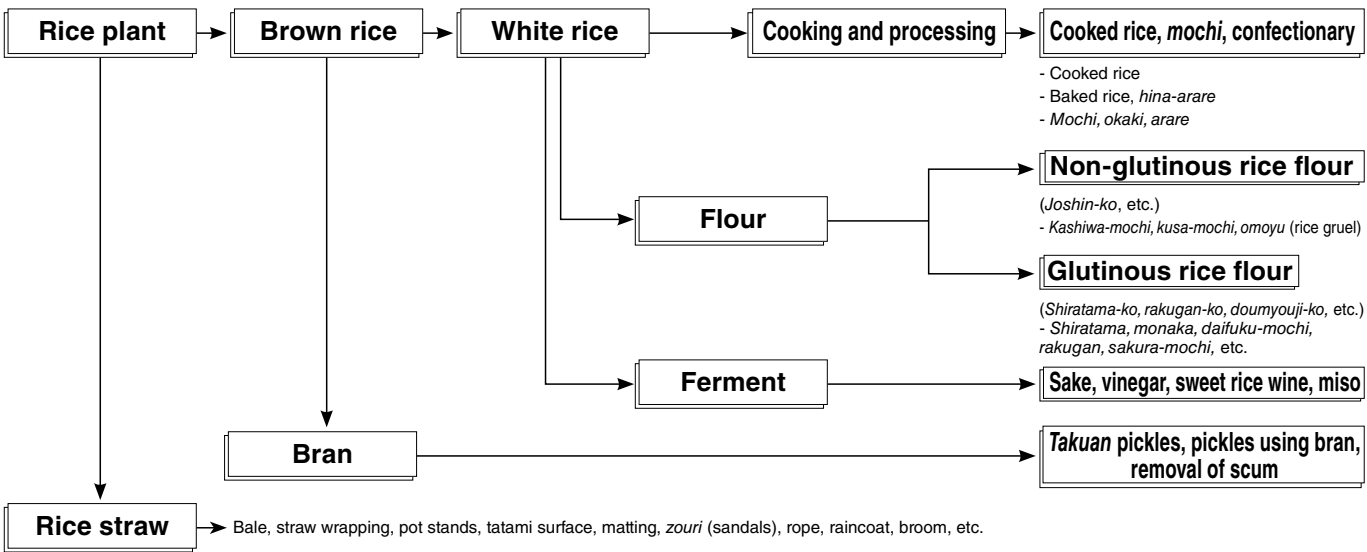
Soup and dishes are for eating cooked rice. “One soup and three dishes” is the basic style of washoku

“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.



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 *katsuobushi* 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.”



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.

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



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.



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.

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.

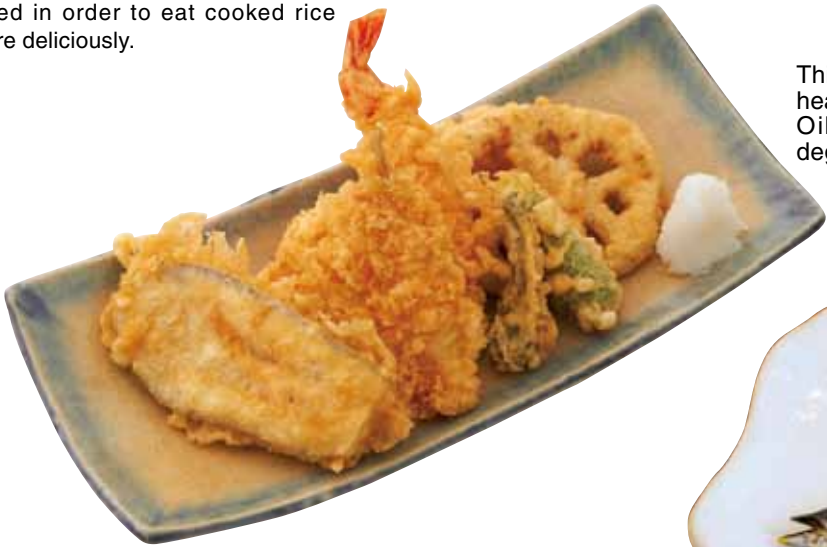
Seaweed is also an essential foodstuff for washoku. *Kombu* has been used through the ages as a source of umami. *Wakame* is used in various dishes, including miso soup. *Nori* is indispensable for making *onigiri* (rice balls). There is also a wide variety of shellfish, and *noshi-awabi*, which is an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

Characteristics of WASHOKU (3) Cooking

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.



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.

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.



Simmerd 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.

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 *katsuobushi*, *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.

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.



sourness, bitterness. Today, seasonings that allow the use of an umami component easily are widely used such as umami seasonings and soy sauce seasoning with *dashi*. They are popular also abroad, and used daily in Japan.

Other than *dashi*, what essential for the taste of washoku is seasonings such as salt, sugar, miso, soy sauce, vinegar, sake, *mirin* (sweet rice wine) and fish sauce. Ingredients like wasabi, mustard, ginger, Japanese pepper, chili pepper and *yuzu* citrus are also used as relishes. With these relishes, the flavors of ingredients are brought out while allowing one to enjoy seasonal feelings at the same time, which is the wisdom of WASHOKU.

In Japan, where the climate is hot and humid in summer, fermented foods developed just like in other countries in Asia. Therefore, fermented seasonings, such as miso and soy sauce vinegar, are frequently used for *washoku*. Most of them are made by fermenting salted soy bean and grains. In the course of preparation, the protein contained in the ingredients is degraded into amino acid, and changes into seasonings containing abundant umami components.

Fermented foods and seasonings



Fermented foods

Narezushi, which is made by maturing salted fish and cooked rice for a few days to ferment with lactic acid, is wisdom to preserve fish. Those made with *funa* of Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture, with mackerel in Wakayama and Toyama Prefectures, and with *ayu* in Gifu Prefecture are well-known. The photo above shows the preparation of mackerel *narezushi* made for a festival at the beginning of the year in Kohoku Region, Shiga Prefecture.

Shiokara

Shiokara is made by salting fish meat and guts and fermenting. It is one of the traditional preserved foods in Japan. Ingredients vary by region, so there are various types of *shiokara* including squid, shrimp, *ami* (mysidacea) and octopus.

Natto

Natto is a fermented food developed in Japan. It is a food made by fermenting soy bean with hay bacillus, and is sometimes referred to as “*itohiki-natto* (stringy *natto*)” in order to distinguish it from *tera-natto* (below). It is not only eaten as-is, but also is used as ingredients for soup or dressing.

Tera-natto

This is a fermented food made by adding *koji* molds to boiled soy bean for fermentation and maturing while being dried. Unlike stringy *itohiki-natto*, *tera-natto* is dry and salty. It is said that the food arrived from the continent together with the propagation of the Zen school, and is called *tera* (temple)-*natto* because it was often made in temples.

Pickles

Pickles are made by pickling food materials in salt, vinegar, *sake* lees, soy sauce, etc. and maturing. It was invented as a way to preserve vegetables for a long time, such as *takuan* pickles (pickled daikon radish), pickled *ume* (Japanese plum) and *nozawana* (a leafy vegetable)-pickles. It is also characteristic that there is wide variety of original pickles in every region of Japan.



Fermented seasoning

Miso

Miso is one of the representative seasonings of Japan, made by fermenting and maturing steamed or boiled soy bean by adding *koji* and salt. It is often used for miso soup and stewed dishes. It is also characteristic that the type of miso varies largely among regions.



Soy sauce

Soy sauce is made by fermenting, maturing and pressing “*moromi*,” which is *koji* made with soy bean and wheat diluted with salt water. It is used for a wide variety of dishes including sashimi, grilled fish, stewed dishes and pan-fried dishes. Soy sauce is divided into five groups: *koikuchi* (dark), *usukuchi* (light), *tamari* (rich), *sai-shikomi* (twice-brewed) and *shiro* (white).



Vinegar

Vinegar is a seasoning to add sourness in washoku dishes like sushi and *namasu*. It is made by adding acetic acid bacteria to sake brewed from rice. The preserving property of food is improved by dipping into vinegar.



Sake

Sake is also one of the essential seasonings for washoku. The major effects of *sake* as seasonings include killing the smell of ingredients, bringing out the umami of foodstuff and improving the flavor, and adding sweetness.



Mirin (Sweet rice wine)

Mirin is a fermented seasoning made with steamed glutinous rice and rice malt, and by maturing for 40 to 60 days. Compared to sugar, its sweetness is softer, and it also has the effect of killing the smell of foodstuff. It is also used to make the surface of food glossy for dishes such as fish teriyaki.



Fish sauce

Fish sauce, having a unique odor and strong umami, is made by fermenting salted fish. *Shottsuru* of Akita, made with *Sailfin* sandfish, and *ishiru* (or *ishiri*) of Noto Peninsula, made with squid and sardine, are well-known.



Seasonings

Salt

Salt has been used widely as a seasoning from ancient times in Japan, which is surrounded by the sea. Not only for seasoning dishes like grilled dishes and sashimi, it is also utilized for preserving foods, such as pickles and dried fish.



Sugar

Sugar is one of the essential seasonings for modern washoku, which includes many dishes focusing on sweetness compared to the cuisines of other parts of the world. However, it is rarely used solely, but by combining with soy sauce, salt and miso in various dishes including stewed dish.



Characteristics of WASHOKU (5) Nutrition

WASHOKU is the ideal model of nutritional balance



Comprised of vegetables, fish, meat and rice, WASHOKU is also well-known for its excellent nutritional balance. Recently, in some regions, school lunch is served with cooked rice menus for all five school days of the week instead of traditional post-war bread menus. Let's find out the secret of the nutrition of washoku, one of its distinct characteristics.

Examples of school lunch menus in Sanjo City, Niigata Prefecture

These are the examples of lunch menus served at elementary and junior high schools in Sanjo City. The Koshihikari breed grown within Sanjo City is used for cooked rice. Some people say that "because rice is digested slowly, children are satisfied even without much dessert." Chinese or Western style dishes are selected to go well with cooked rice. The menu always includes some kind of soup.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cooked rice Seasoned and deep-fried squid (two pieces) Dish dressed with <i>natto</i> Mushroom soup Liquid yogurt (Elementary school: 619 kcal/ Junior high-school: 731 kcal)	Cooked rice with green soy bean (<i>edamame</i>) Cheese-fried salmon Pan-fried and seasoned <i>kuki-wakame</i> Egg soup Milk (Elementary school: 687 kcal/ Junior high-school: 823 kcal)	Cooked rice Spicy chicken Dressed squid and cucumber Ginger <i>miso</i> soup Milk (Elementary school: 639 kcal/ Junior high-school: 752 kcal)	Cooked rice Saury cooked with <i>ume</i> flavor Dish dressed with <i>takuan</i> pickles <i>Nikujaga</i> (Stewed potatoes and beef) Milk <i>Nashi</i> pear (Elementary school: 688 kcal/ Junior high-school: 814 kcal)	Cooked rice Curry-flavored seasoning for cooked rice Spinach omelet French-style salad Pumpkin soup Milk (Elementary school: 708 kcal/ Junior high-school: 833 kcal)

Washoku, combining the main dish of cooked rice (also including barley and other grains) with seafood, meat, vegetables, fermented seasoning and *dashi*, is a well-balanced meal also from a nutritional perspective.

From a historical point of view, it used to be a diet strongly balanced towards grain, with heavy consumption as the main dish in everyday meals.

However, there are many things we can learn from the traditional diet, such as efficiently taking amino acids in cooked rice by eating tofu, *natto* and miso soup together, or enjoy eating seafood on special occasions such as annual functions.

Especially, the basic structure of washoku that has been handed down for centuries is excellent.

Dishes including abundant protein such as fish, meat and tofu are served as the primary plate of side dishes. And then, other dishes including vegetables and potatoes are prepared. Soup is prepared so that it goes well with the primary plate. Grilled fish, stewed vegetable, leafy vegetable *ohitashi* and miso soup represents a favorable nutritional balance.

The basic style of washoku was preserved in each household until about the 1980s. The amount of main dish decreased slightly, and side dishes increased, particularly showing the growth of the ratio of milk and dairy foods and meat. The PFC balance, which is one of the indexes to measure nutritional balance, showed the ideal ratio around that time (refer to the next page).

However, thereafter, occasions for eating out increased and the Westernization of home cooking progressed, and rice consumption decreased sharply and the problem of lifestyle-related diseases due to excessive fat intake arouse. In such context, movement to review people's dietary habit started in

various regions in Japan. One example is the effort made with school lunch.

The fully-supplied school lunch with the style of bread, milk and side dishes started in 1950, in the midst of post-war food shortages. School lunch with bread that continued until 1976, when rice was introduced into school lunch, also had an impact on the basic style of washoku.

The ratio of school lunch with cooked rice gradually increased, and in 2010, more than 90% of elementary and junior high schools serve school lunch with cooked rice more than three times a week. However, the ratio of schools serving rice all five days of the week is still low at around 7%.

Let us take a look at the case example of Sanjo City, Niigata Prefecture, which switched to serving rice school lunch all five days of the week in 2008.

The city decided to introduce school lunch serving rice all five days of the week with an aim to build healthy bodies, and to acquire ideal dietary habits and live healthy for a lifetime by having a balanced diet while growing up.

For the main dish, the *Koshihikari* breed rice grown within the City by reducing the amount of pesticides used, and polished with rice bran slightly remaining. The menu is based on this main dish and side dishes include a primary plate and other side dishes, and soup. The primary plate is not limited to traditional *washoku* dishes, such as fried salmon, spicy chicken and saury cooked with *ume* (Japanese plum) flavor, but is considered to be naturally incorporated within the basic style of washoku.

Although bread goes well with fat and sugar and can easily lead to obesity, rice with bran remaining is digested slowly, which not only resulted in a decrease in the number of children who eat snacks, but also resulted in a decreasing trend in the number of children with obesity. It is considered that



Some people point out that food preferences among children changed after switching to rice menus. When children are asked their favorite side dishes, they raise washoku dishes such as "grilled fish" and "natto" other than standard dishes such as "Hamburg steak" and "curry and rice."



"Itadaki-masu" and "Gochisou-sama" are said out loud by all students at lunchtime to show their appreciation. Dietary education is also prioritized, and the connotation of these phrases is taught at school.

the rhythm of their dietary life improved.

Side dishes that go well with cooked rice can use locally-grown vegetables easily. Therefore, menus with a wide variety can be prepared for each season. As a result of the education on the concept of "one soup and three dishes," the number of children who leave foods uneaten decreased.

By adding new ideas to side dishes within the basic eating pattern, it is possible to enjoy a wide variety of meals. It also allows for learning about seasonal foodstuff, and to acquire knowledge on annual functions.

It is also crucially important that children experience the basic style of washoku through school lunch every day. The habit may not be acquired just by experiencing it occasionally, but may become a standard and take root by repeating it every day. It is expected that children will gradually think about the combination on their own. It is considered that school lunch should play an important role in the future.

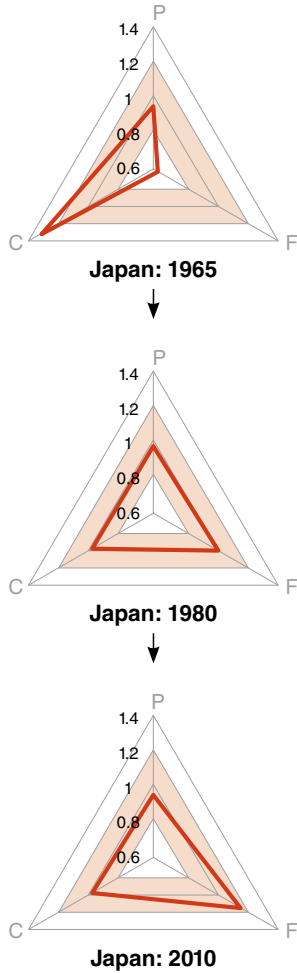


Children who finished the first served lunch rushed and made a queue to have another serving of cooked rice. There were no leftovers this day.

What is PFC balance

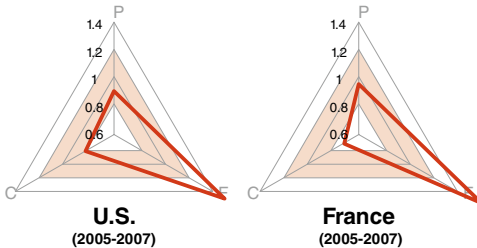
PFC stands for **protein, fat and carbohydrates**, which are the three major nutrients especially essential for humans. PFC balance is the calorific ratio of protein, fat and carbohydrates of every meal. The ideal PFC balance for healthy life is protein: 15%, fat: 25%, and carbohydrates: 60%.

Changes of PFC balance in Japan



The PFC balance of Japanese people was weighted toward carbohydrates in 1965, but was excellently balanced in 1980. However, the dietary life of Japanese people thereafter tended to have too much meat and fat, with a decreased amount of rice, and it has been coming closer to a Western type of diet in 2010.

PFC balance in the U.S. and France



Source: FAO Statistics Yearbook (Food Balance Sheet for the data of Japan); The ideal balance of protein: 10-20%, fat: 20-30% and carbohydrates: 50-70% has been made into an index with a range of 0.8 to 1.2.



Before welcoming guests, water is sprinkled at the front of the restaurant. It shows that the place is purified with water and is well prepared. Selecting hanging scrolls for the alcove that match the entire concept is also one of the basics of hospitality. Flowers decorated are hand-grown and arranged in the vase of the alcove by the host. About 150 varieties of plants and flowers are grown in the garden in preparation for the arrangement. The guests are welcomed by the warm hospitality of the madam or the hostess.

Characteristics of WASHOKU (6) Arrangement

Mindset and formality of welcoming people

Hospitality is not a unilateral style offered to a guest. It is a comfort generated from the mind of caring for one another.

The well-groomed garden is swept over and sprinkled with water. The alcove is decorated with hanging scrolls and arrangements of seasonal flowers. The *fusuma* panel of the room is replaced with a screen window in summertime to make the space feel cooler, while keeping warm in winter. These are all preparations for welcoming guests. That is what we call *shitsurai*, the arrangement of the space. For washoku, and especially for *kaiseki* for tea ceremony, *shitsurai* is a critical element together with foodstuff and types of dishes.

Even in households, those who prepare meals imagine the faces of those who eat them. Those who eat imagine the feeling of those who prepared the meal for them. The joy of hospitality arises from this exchange of imagination.

Hospitality in *ryotei* restaurants is the ultimately-sophisticated form of such culture of hospitality. Let us hear from Mr. Eiichi Takahashi, who is the 14th manager of the long-established *ryotei* restaurant in Kyoto, "Hyoutei," and was designated Holder of Intangible Cultural Techniques of Kyoto Prefecture as the first chef, about the spirit of such hospitality.

"It can be said that *ryotei* is where Japanese culture is concentrated. Even the pathway leading from the entrance to the room gives the atmosphere of the season. A scroll of the season or the event is hung in the room, and the room is decorated with flowers especially selected for it. We prepare the room so that the atmosphere is naturally accepted by the seasonal sense that Japanese people have naturally acquired, and welcome the guests. Although *ryotei* is a special place that is different from people's daily life, we try to offer natural *shitsurai* and hospitality that are not excessive but lack nothing."

Flowers decorated in the rooms of "Hyoutei" are hand-grown by the manager in the garden, and are also arranged by the manager himself. "I am always reminded of Sen no Rikyu's words, 'flowers should be as growing wild in the field,' at the root of hospitality. That may sound easy but is very difficult." Even at the well-established restaurant, the host devotes himself every day to improving the decoration to welcome guests in a natural style.



Expressing the four seasons

In "Hyoutei," a *mukozuke* dish of sea bream from the particular region is served throughout the year. However, the four seasons are expressed by changing the plates and decorations.

Spring

The plate with a cherry blossom pattern adds floridness as if a flower bloomed on the table. Sashimi is garnished with vinegared parsnip root and wild-grown *nori* seaweed.



Summer

Ice is filled inside a slightly deep glass bowl. You can feel the coolness both with eyes and tongue. Sashimi is garnished with *shiso* (Japanese basil) buds and Malva nut.



Autumn

The plate is the shape of a chrysanthemum, the flower of autumn, and combined with the deep color, provides an atmosphere that goes well with autumn. Sashimi is garnished with *iwatake* mushroom and chrysanthemum petals.



Winter

The crane is a lucky charm and motif that is also used for the New Year table. Sashimi is garnished with *Suizenji nori* and purple *shiso* shoot.



Characteristics of WASHOKU (7) Chopsticks and bowls

Chopsticks and bowls that support WASHOKU

Japan is the only country where only chopsticks are used for meals. WASHOKU takes pride also in a unique culture of utensils, together with plates and bowls that give seasonal feelings.

Japanese people use plates and bowls in everyday meals casually, by putting cooked rice in a rice bowl, miso soup in a wooden bowl, and grilled fish on a flat plate. The types, shapes and materials used for these plates and bowls vary widely. There is no country, either among nearby countries or in the West, where such a wide variety of plates and bowls are used. That is not irrelevant to the fact that the country has distinct seasons.

"Just using different plates for the season changes the mood even at home," says Mr. Takahashi of "Hyoutei." For example, try using something with florid colors and shapes for spring, materials like glass and celadon that give a cool feeling for summer, something with harvesting colors for autumn, and thick earthenware or wooden plates and bowls that give a feeling of warmth for winter. It is possible to express the season just by changing colors, materials and shapes. This is the enjoyment that is available only with WASHOKU.

Japanese use chopsticks at every meal without giving it much thought, and they are the representative utensils of food culture in Japan. The tradition of using spoons disappeared since the Nara period, and people started to use only chopsticks, which established the style of holding a bowl in one's hand and sipping the hot soup inside directly from the bowl. At the same time, it became standard that there are exclusive bowls and chopsticks owned by each person. This is different from the food culture in other Southeast Asian countries, where spoons are used and particular bowls and chopsticks are not assigned to an individual. Japan is the only country where people eat only with chopsticks among the cultural zone of chopsticks. In addition, there is also wide variation in chopsticks according to their use, such as for eating, serving or cooking. Even among *shoku-bashi* used for eating, there is a lineup of different shapes, materials, finishing process and length.

How chopsticks work

Chopsticks for Japanese people are an important utensil covering the whole process of cooking, serving and eating. Because *shoku-bashi* for eating are basically owned by individuals, it is characteristic that people can select a pair suitable for them.

Types

There are chopsticks used for eating and chopsticks used for cooking. *Sai-bashi* for cooking, are about 30-50 cm long to protect the hands from heat, and some pairs are tied with a string so that one does not go missing. *Tori-bashi* for serving is also a type of *sai-bashi*. Because *shoku-bashi* are basically owned by individuals, you can select a pair with a suitable length for you. Many of them are decorated with lacquer or *raden* (mother-of-pearl work) decoration.

Shape

Shapes of chopsticks used in households include square type, square type with rounded corners, five-sided, six-sided, seven-sided, eight-sided and carved. You can select the one that fits in your hands. There are also types that are specially processed at the tips. As for individual chopsticks for guests and disposable chopsticks, there are types such as *genroku-bashi*, with an oblong cut surface and slit and chase for splitting, and *rikyu-bashi*, which is wide at the center and narrow at both ends.

Materials

Not only the shape, but also the materials vary. Hard wood like ebony and ironwood are frequently used in recent years. Among trees in Japan, Japanese cedar has a unique fragrance and has been used for chopsticks in *kaiseki* for tea ceremony and disposable chopsticks. *Hinoki* is resistant to water and humidity, has a strong preservative quality, and is light and easy to hold. Bamboo is strong, bows adequately and easy to pick up small objects.



Learn the manners of using chopsticks [Bad-mannered use of chopsticks]

The basic pattern of *washoku* is to eat cooked rice in between side dishes and soup, i.e., to eat a bite of cooked rice and then have a bite of a side dish, or eat a bite of cooked rice and then have a sip of soup. Please remember that the following uses of chopsticks are regarded as poor manners.



Utsuri-bashi (skipping)

First placing the chopsticks on a dish and then moving to a different dish without picking any food up



Mayoi-bashi (waving)

Moving chopsticks over dishes as if hovering to choose what to pick up



Sashi-bashi (pointing)

Pointing to people or things with chopsticks while eating



Watashi-bashi (bridging)

Placing the chopsticks over a plate or a bowl before finishing the meal



Yose-bashi (pulling)

Pulling plates or bowls to oneself with chopsticks

Characteristics of WASHOKU (8) Sake

Japanese sake that accentuates the appeal of WASHOKU and relaxes your mind

Rice is the staple food for Japanese people, and is also a spiritual cornerstone of the culture. Japanese sake, brewed from rice, is an indispensable element for WASHOKU. It is also the “national liquor” of Japan.

Japanese sake is made mainly with rice, rice malt and water and by fermenting the ingredients. As for ingredients, rice especially bred to have properties favorable for *sake-brewing* is used, which is different from ordinary rice for cooking. Water, which comprises 80% of the components of Japanese *sake*, is also an important element that determines the quality. Good-quality water that does not perish the flavor of *sake* is essential.

The *sake*-brewing process incorporates a wide variety of techniques. For example, there is a technique to polish the rice grain to adjust the taste and fragrance of the finished product. The purpose is to remove protein and fat from the outer side of the grain that may cause bad taste, but in the case of exquisite *daiginjo*, *sake* is made by rice milled to less than half of the original grain size.

Another example is the technique to ferment rice. In the case of *sake* brewing, fermentation means the process of yeast eating sugar and generating alcohol. However, rice does not include sugar, so starch in rice must be first transformed into sugar with the enzyme of *koji* molds, and then fermented by adding yeast. Such a complex process (duplex fermentation) is necessary for brewing sake. Koji used for this process is also a unique type used in Japan

called *bara-koji*. It is unique in that it has a strong glycation effect (transforming into sugar), and has a large impact on the fragrance and taste of Japanese *sake*.

In Japan, where culture has developed mainly around rice cultivation, much importance is placed on rice, *mochi* and *sake* made of rice, regardless of region. It was believed that every grain of rice holds a deity in it, and that *sake* can be brewed because of the blessing of the deity. Similarly to foods, *sake* was used as a tool to come closer to deities from ancient days.

At the same time, sake also has an important role to connect ties among families, relatives and regions. For example, *omiki* is sake for deities. At festivals, people drink the *omiki* offered to deities after the rite. The region and the community enhance their unity by drinking the same *sake* with the deities and by sharing it among others.

Shochu, using rice, barley or sweet potatoes as ingredients, is also the national liquor together with Japanese *sake*. Japanese liquor has important roles of relaxing people's minds, enhancing relationships and accentuating the taste of dishes and warming up the table.



There are nearly 1,600 *sake* brewers throughout Japan. Although the number is decreasing every year, a “Japanese *sake* boom” occurs once every few years.



Omiki, an altarage and tribute to deities, holds a very important position so that it is placed at the center of the top tier of the altar.

Characteristics of WASHOKU (9) Japanese sweets and Japanese tea

Wagashi (Japanese sweets) and tea that are close to people’s lives

Wagashi expresses appreciation for the blessings of nature and the delicate changes of season. Japanese tea is not only for quenching thirst, but also for fulfilling your mind and elevating your feelings.

Wagashi made with a wish on special occasions



January

Hanabira-mochi

Sweetened burdock and sweet white miso paste are wrapped inside red or white *mochi* or *gyuhi*. The origin is “*hagatame* (firm teeth)” *mochi* for wishing for longevity in one of the New Year events back in the Heian period (8th-12th century). Due to the combination of *mochi* and miso, it is also referred to as “*tsutsumi* (wrapped) *zohni*.”



May

Kashiwamochi

Round and flat shaped *mochi* made of rice flour is folded in half, holding adzuki bean or miso paste inside, and is wrapped with Kashiwa oak leaf. Because the leaves of the Kashiwa oak tree do not fall off until new buds sprout out, they are used with a wish for one's descendants to prosper. It is used as a tribute for the *sekku* of tango on May 5th in the old calendar.



June

Minazuki

Adzuki *tsubuan* (sweet red-bean paste) is spread on the surface of white uiro (sticky steamed cake). It is eaten in early summer, reminding one of “*Nagoshi no Harai*,” held on *misoka* (30th) of June in the lunar calendar in Kyoto. The adzuki bean has the meaning of expelling evil spirits, and the triangle shape represents ice.



October

Inoko-mochi

October in the lunar calendar is referred to as “I no Tsuki (the wild boar month in the Oriental Zodiac)” and this sweet used to be eaten in an annual event on the “I no Hi (the wild boar day in the Oriental Zodiac)” of I no *Tsuki*. In the old calendar, October is the beginning of winter. On such timing, this sweet was eaten with a wish for one's descendants to prosper, with the healthy and prolific boar (the symbol of I) in mind.

Classification of wagashi

- *Mochi-mono*: *mochi*, *dango*, *daifuku*, etc.
- *Mushi-mono*: *manju*, *imo-youkan*, *uirou*, *murasame*, etc.
- *Neri-mono*: *nerikiri*, *konashi*, *gyuhi*, *an*, *kuzu-gashi*, etc.
- *Yaki-mono*: *miso-matsukaze*, *senbei*, *momoyama*, *castella*, *dorayaki*, etc.
- *Nagashi-mono*: *nishiki-dama*, *neri-youkan*, *mizu-youkan*, etc.
- *Age-mono*: *age-senbei*, *karinto*, etc.
- *Uchi-mono* (*oshi-mono*): *rakugan*, etc.
- *Oka-mono*: *monaka*, *kinton*, *kanoko*, *sutama*, etc.
- *Kake-mono*: *kompeito*, *gosikimate*, *ishi-goromo*, etc.

This list is a rough classification of *wagashi* according to its process of manufacturing. There are other ways of classification, such as *namagashi*, *han-namagashi* and *higashi* according to moisture content, or *jo-namagashi*, *namigashi* and *dagashi* according to the class.

* *Oka-mono* means the combination of already-finished products (example: *kinton* = *ame-dama* + *soboro-an*)

Source: “Exhibition on the History of Wagashi” from the 50th Toraya Archives Exhibition

Sweets are also a critical part of WASHOKU. They can be divided into *jo-namagashi* for guests, and *manju* and *mochi-gashi* that are eaten daily. There are also various other types of *wagashi*, including *higashi* and *dagashi*. In addition, there is also classification according to the process of manufacturing, such as *mochi-mono* including *dango* and *daifuku*, *neri-mono* including *gyuhi* and *an*, or *nagashi-mono* including *nishiki-dama* and *mizu-youkan*. A wide variety of sweets have been created with ingredients such as rice, barley, adzuki and other beans, sugar and *mizuame* (thick sugar liquid).

There are also sweets for tea ceremony, enjoyed with *matcha* (green powdered tea). Ingredients, colors and design are determined according to the season, to be enjoyed not only with the tongue but also with the eyes.

There are also sweets connected to annual functions. For example, March 3rd in the lunar calendar is “*Hina-Matsuri* (girl's festival),” and people eat *kusamochi*, made of *mochi* seasoned with *yomogi* (*mugwort*), which is a symbol of strong vitality and is believed to have the effect of expelling evil spirits.

Japanese tea is appropriate to enjoy with *wagashi*. Green tea arrived in Japan from China in the 12th century. However, the manufacturing process of green tea has been established as an original style in Japan of steaming raw tea leaves and then kneading before drying. Caffeine included in green tea has an alerting influence, while catechin has an antioxidant effect. It also contains abundant vitamin C and is good for health. The fragrance and umami peculiar to Japanese tea is the essence of Japanese culture.



Hand-kneading, which is the unique process of manufacturing Japanese tea, is done to bring out the umami while squashing the fibers of tea leaves. Hand-kneading avoids the tea leaves being cut into pieces, which preserves the sweetness of tea.

Necessity of dietary education

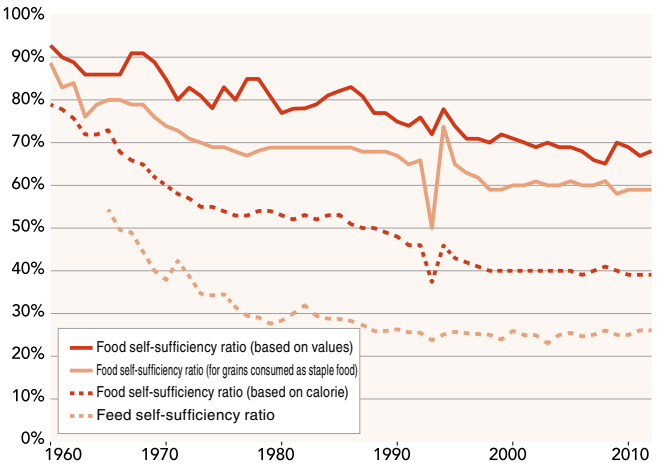
WASHOKU is now endangered. How can we hand it down to future generations?

Experiencing major transformations in the past 150 years, washoku is now starting to decay. Where is the cause?

The culture of WASHOKU in Japan has been changing constantly not only due to the natural environment but also from influence from abroad. After modernization, new dishes were invented, such as meals combining Western-style dishes with the basic style of washoku (for example, *korokke* and *tonkatsu*), or stewed dishes and dressed dishes containing meat and vegetables. Many of them are inherited while maintaining the element of

WASHOKU, such as the basic style of washoku, use of seasonings such as soy sauce and miso, or dishes that can be eaten with chopsticks. However, when Japan entered the high-growth period after World War II, people's dietary habits started to change rapidly. The first fast food and casual dining restaurants opened in the 1970s. Convenience store franchises also developed.

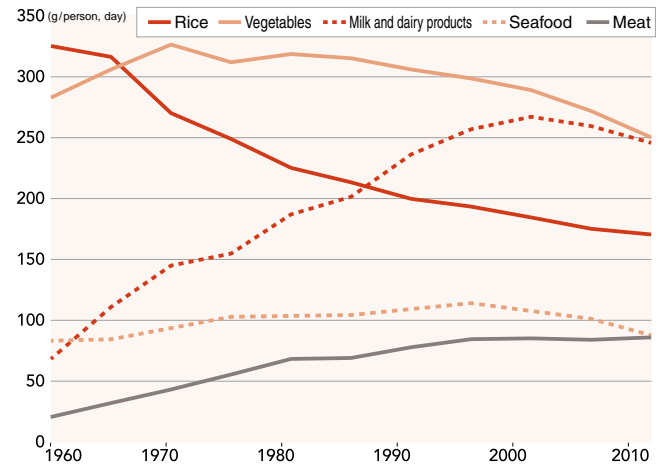
Changes in dietary habit



What will become of WASHOKU with less consumption of Japanese products?

The food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan is constantly declining. While it was 73% in 1965 (based on calories), it was 39% in 2012. The major reason for this is a decline in the consumption amount of rice, fish and vegetables that can be provided within Japan, and an increase in the consumption of livestock products grown with grain feeds that are difficult to produce in Japan, frozen/processed foods and wheat that tend to rely on imported ingredients. Is there a future for healthy washoku, which allows for well-balanced intake of carbohydrates, protein and fat?

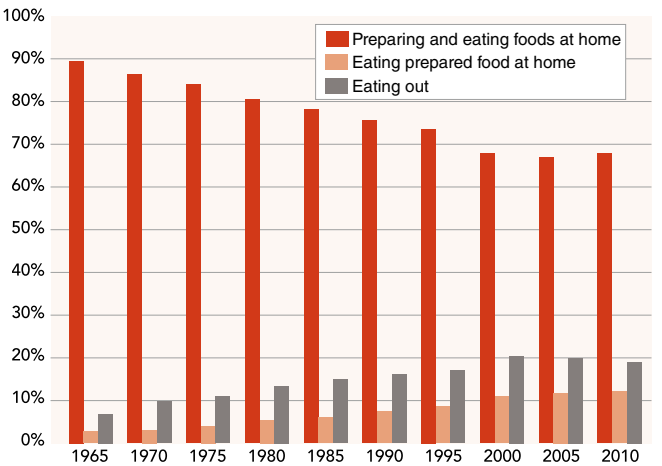
Changes in the food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan
Prepared from the Food Balance Sheet by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



Rice consumption amount halved in 50 years!? What increased instead are meat and dairy products.

What can be found when looking at the food consumption amount per capita by items? It shows that the amount of rice consumed by Japanese people is showing a striking decline. While the consumption of rice per day per person was about 315g in 1960, it almost halved to about 163g in 2010. What increased instead are milk and dairy products (from about 60g to about 240g) and meat (from about 14g to about 80g). It shows changes in the style of *washoku*, eating cooked rice with side dishes mainly containing vegetables and fish.

Net food supply per capita per day
Prepared from the Food Balance Sheet by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



Even eating at home, occasions for cooking at home are decreasing!?

In contrast to "eating out," home-made meals are prepared and eaten at home. However, there is another pattern, purchasing ready-to-eat dishes such as bento and prepared foods and eat at home. In fact, this pattern of eating prepared food at home is increasing. While the ratio of eating out is generally unchanged since 2000, the ratio or eating prepared food at home is constantly increasing, while that of preparing and eating foods at home is decreasing. If the number of households where families eat at home but do not prepare meals at home is increasing, wouldn't that mean that occasions to convey the important elements of WASHOKU to children are decreasing?

Ratio of those who wouldn't be able to stand not eating cooked rice at least once every day

Prepared from "Fixed-Point of Living 2012" by the Hakuho Institute of Life and Living

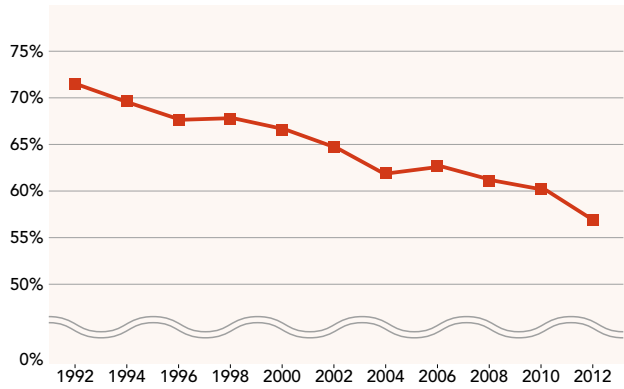
Although the balance of a main dish and side dishes struck an ideal balance by around the 1980s (p.26), the consumption of rice declined further thereafter, while the consumption of bread increased. Consumption of meat, fat, milk and dairy products also increased, and the food self-sufficiency ratio declined. Eating out with family became an everyday affair, and meals at home are also Westernized.

With the diffusion of microwave ovens and frozen and instant foods, preparation of meals became highly convenient. On the other hand, this means the occasions for cooking at home decreased.

In such context, how can we convey the advantages of WASHOKU to future generations? In addition to handing down the tradition of meals at home from parents to children, it should be necessary to transmit the message to children and also to their parents through school education. It is also required to learn specifically about WASHOKU from elderly people.

"I'm okay without rice." Such people are increasing!?

There are data showing that the ratio of those who wouldn't be able to stand not eating cooked rice at least once every day has been decreasing in the recent 20 years. The ratio was 71.4% in 1992, but it decreased to 56.4% in 2012.



Ratio of those who wouldn't be able to stand not eating cooked rice at least once every day
Prepared from "Fixed-Point of Living 2012" by the Hakuho Institute of Life and Living



Many modern kitchens face the living room instead of a wall. In this household, with the husband and wife both having jobs, the husband also cooks in the kitchen frequently. The important elements of WASHOKU can be handed down to the next generation by preparing meals together with children like above.

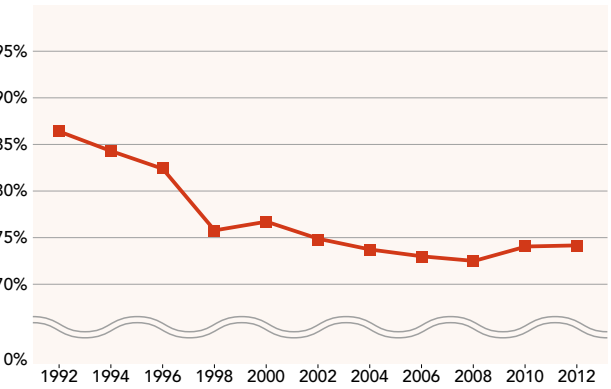
Selection of foods from the weaning period and enriching the eating experiences during infancy are especially important. Dietary habits developed during childhood continue to have a strong influence thereafter.

The concept of WASHOKU can be conveyed through buildup of activities such as experiencing the deliciousness of *dashi* every day or tasting fish and learning how to remove bones with chopsticks in an enjoyable atmosphere.

When people encounter a taste they have never experienced before, they recognize it as a foreign culture. Any cooking method can be difficult for a person who has no experience with it, even if the steps are actually simple. Building up experiences such as observing the process of preparing meals every day, enjoying helping, using beautiful plates and bowls with great care, sharing the same foods with family and friends and eating together at festivals and flower-viewing parties, should not only result in the conveyance of WASHOKU as a culture, but also lead to developing people's power to live.

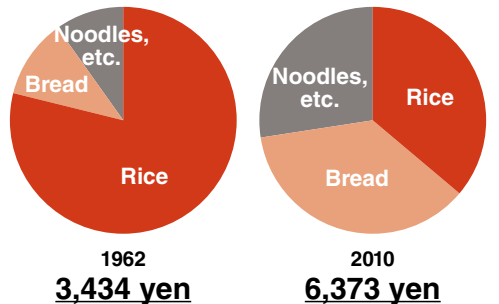
The ratio of those who eat osechi-ryori is gradually decreasing every year.

During New Year, families and relatives gather and celebrate being able to start the new year in peace while sharing *osechi-ryori* together. However, the ratio of those who eat *osechi-ryori* is also decreasing every year. While it was 86.6% in 1992, it declined to 74.8% in 2012.



The ratio of those who ate osechi-ryori for New Year.
Prepared from "Fixed-Point of Living 2012" by the Hakuho Institute of Life and Living

Prefer bread and noodles over rice; is the tendency accelerating?



3,434 yen (1962) vs **6,373 yen** (2010)
Breakdown of household expenditure on grains per month

Prepared from the Annual Report on the Survey of Household Economy by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication

Expenditure on rice, which took up more than 80% in 1962, is largely replaced by bread in 2010. Although the consumption volume of rice is larger than bread, expenditure for eating ready-to-eat breads and noodles at home is increasing compared to that for rice, which must be cooked before eating. This may also indicate that occasions for cooking at home are decreasing.

“Gochisou-sama.”

“Itadaki-masu.”



The future of WASHOKU

After entering the 21st century, washoku is becoming a boom in the world. The taste and healthiness is attracting people's attention, and many Japanese food stores and restaurants can be found in every part of the world.

Even though WASHOKU is becoming a focus of attention in the world, its future is at risk in Japan, its place of origin.

As we have seen so far, the history of WASHOKU had been taking in something new quite flexibly. From time immemorial, Japanese people had been incorporating the food culture brought from foreign countries into their own dietary habits, and succeeded in developing the unique food culture of Japan. They have been creating dishes perfectly fit for the environment of each region. Dishes eaten and how to eat them have also been changing in each period and region.

However, there are things that are kept unchanged: improving the cooking method so as to bring out the deliciousness of foodstuff obtained from rich nature and to taste it; decorating the table with the atmosphere of the season and holding eating occasions where the feeling of hospitality can be shared; regarding the combination of “one soup and three dishes” as the basic style of meals and living a healthy dietary life; and eating *osechi-ryori* in New Year and *sekihan* on celebration day together with the members of the family. In other words, meals work as ties bonding the family.

Just like the rich nature, isn't WASHOKU, which allowed Japanese people to live healthy and strengthened ties among them, also an important Japanese culture that we must preserve?

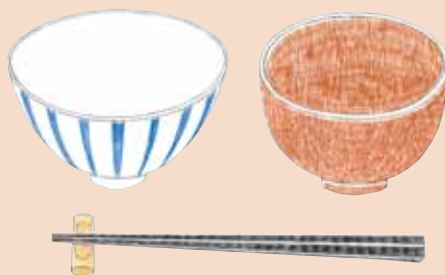
Let's say “*itadaki-masu*” and “*gochisou-sama*” properly. Only this may bring our feelings closer to washoku. It can unite people with warm ties.

All in all, Japanese people favor eating cooked rice. Soup with rich *dashi* flavor will fulfill their minds as well as their stomachs. No one would feel that WASHOKU, a wonderful asset Japanese people have been developing over a long history, should be left to go extinct. It would be a real pleasure if this booklet serves as a starting point for people to feel proud of WASHOKU, being praised as a good food culture in the world, as a Japanese asset, and cherish it and to hand it down to next generations.



WASHOKU

和 食



“Gochisou-sama”