



JAPAN'S TASTY SECRETS

*Local food that
satisfies the world's most
demanding eaters*

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You like Japanese food?

Think you've already tried the best that Japan has to offer? It might be time to think again.

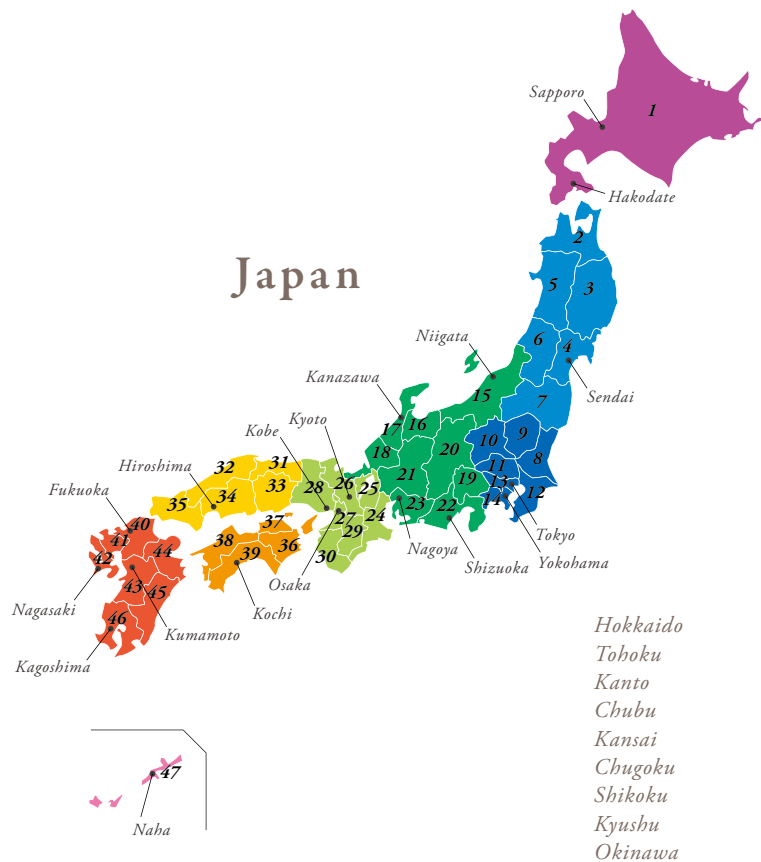
Japan is packed with delicious dishes. All over the country people are constantly cooking up new ways to satisfy a nation's hunger for culinary perfection. Hundreds of gourmet treats come and go, some starting out as a local favorite and then sweeping the land. Occasionally a food fad will last, or maybe the nation grows to love a local delicacy over a period of years. The greatest success stories are rewarded with a place in the nation's heart.

While various dishes are popular for showcasing local ingredients, many others succeed for the most basic reason of all: they taste great! And once a local food becomes established at the national level, it's made it. It's passed the ultimate test of culinary fitness. In many cases you don't even need to be a fan of mainstream Japanese cuisine to appreciate its value. It appeals instantly to anyone with an appetite. Other dishes are more of an adventure, requiring at least some awareness and

appreciation of Japanese ingredients and their applications. And one or two delicacies may strike you as extreme cuisine: enjoyable only by those whose palate is completely attuned to the full range of tastes and textures found in Japan, surely the world's most diverse culinary culture.

That easy-to-extreme diversity is evident even in our initial selection of local cuisines loved all over Japan—but you probably won't have to read long before something gets your mouth watering. Our second selection focuses on food that has won a loyal local following in the region where it originated. Here, too, you will find many dishes that can be—or already are—cherished across regional or national boundaries. And even if occasionally you catch yourself thinking, "I'm not sure I could eat that," remind yourself that each dish is a survivor of a merciless process of food selection. If Japan says it's fit to eat, it could be time to take your tastebuds to the gym!

Now come on; let's eat! Itadakimasu!



Hokkaido
Tohoku
Kanto
Chubu
Kansai
Chugoku
Shikoku
Kyushu
Okinawa

- | | | |
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| 2 Aomori Prefecture | 18 Fukui Prefecture | 34 Hiroshima Prefecture |
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Local dishes
loved by
the nation

Hokkaido

Map No.1

Hokkaido



Northern delights

Uni-ikura-don

Rice bowl with sea urchin and salmon roe

Hokkaido is renowned for its excellent seafood, especially uni (sea urchin) and ikura (salmon roe, often known as "red caviar"). These two delicacies, simply arranged on top of cooked rice in a generous-sized bowl, offer a superb contrast of textures and flavors. The firm globes of salty salmon roe complement the rich, melt-in-the-mouth softness of the sea urchin. Other favorite toppings for seafood rice-bowl dishes include crabmeat and scallops freshly caught off the coast of Hokkaido.

Iwate

Map No.3

Tohoku



Cool noodles

Morioka Reimen

Chilled noodles

This dish was introduced to Morioka in 1954 by an immigrant from the north of the Korean Peninsula who opened a restaurant in the city. Alongside Korean barbecue, he served chilled Korean-style noodles, which soon became popular in the area. The semi-transparent noodles have a firm, al-dente texture and are served with plenty of savory broth made by boiling down beef and chicken.

Hokkaido

Map No.1

Hokkaido



Curry so good you can spoon it up

Soup Curry

Is it soup, or is it curry? Who cares when this creation, originally concocted in Sapporo 30 years ago, tastes so smooth? As with ordinary chicken curry, chicken legs are cooked up with a hodgepodge of vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, or bell peppers. To this is added a broth made from beef, pork, chicken meat and vegetables — with a spoonful of miso stirred in to give it extra special zest.

Iwate

Map No.3

Tohoku



These spicy noodles are anything but flat

Morioka jaja-men

Morioka-style flat noodles

This dish of wide, flat noodles originated in northeast China and is said to have first gained popularity in Japan as a fast food served at outdoor stalls in the city of Morioka. The noodles are topped with a sauce of ground meat fried up with miso, along with slivers of cucumber and chopped scallions. You mix this up thoroughly and season with grated ginger, vinegar, garlic, and chili oil — extra zest guaranteed.

Miyagi

Map No.4

Tohoku



A better beef

Gyutan-yaki*Grilled beef tongue*

Compared with beef sirloin, the tongue is considered healthier because it is lower in calories and fat. Cut into thick slices and grilled until it is soft, the meat is usually seasoned simply with salt. Sendai was the first city in Japan where this dish was developed. There are many restaurants serving it, typically accompanied by rice cooked with barley grain, along with a bowl of beef tail soup.

Tochigi

Map No.9

Kanto



Scrumptious dumplings

Utsunomiya Gyoza*Meat dumplings*

Utsunomiya is not just the capital of Tochigi Prefecture; it's Japan's gyoza dumpling capital. Local people spend more on gyoza (Chinese jiaozi) dumplings than anywhere else in Japan. Tochigi is also Japan's largest producer of nira (garlic chives). These pungent greens are finely chopped, mixed with cabbage, garlic and ground pork, then wrapped in thin skins of rolled-out dough to form crescent-shaped dumplings. These may be pan-fried, boiled in water, or deep-fried.

Akita

Map No.5

Tohoku



Wok-fried sensation

Yokote Yakisoba*Stir-fried noodles*

This variation on the theme of stir-fried noodles was developed soon after the end of World War II in the city of Yokote, Akita Prefecture, as an afternoon snack for local children. Wheat flour noodles are wok-fried, seasoned with a sweetened Worcester-style sauce, then topped with a fried egg. The noodles are straight, rather than crinkly, and each serving comes with a relish of soy-pickled vegetable known as Fukujin-zuke.

Gunma

Map No.10

Kanto



Yummy yaki-manju

Yaki-manju*Grilled skewered dumplings*

Wheat flour is allowed to ferment in sake; this dough is formed into small dumplings, which are skewered, daubed with a sweet-savory miso-based sauce, then grilled over hot charcoal. Yaki-manju are a tradition dating back more than 150 years. To this day they are a popular snack food sold at street stalls on special occasions, such as cherry blossom parties or summer festivals.

Saitama

Map No.11

Kanto



Recession-proof grilled meats

Yakitori / Yakiton*Skewer-grilled chicken or pork*

In Higashi-Matsuyama, the specialty is morsels of pork skewered, dusted with salt, and grilled (much like yakitori chicken), then seasoned with a special miso mix made with a blend of over 10 spices. It's a custom that dates back to the 1950s, when stalls began cooking pork head meat mixed with chopped scallions as a more affordable substitute for chicken.

Kanagawa

Map No.14

Kanto



Pleasure in simplicity

Yokosuka Kaigun-kare*Yokosuka Navy curry*

Curry was introduced to Japan in the late 19th century. It soon gained massive popularity in the form of kare-raisu (curry with rice), a dish that was adopted by the Japanese naval base in Yokosuka. Incorporating meat and vegetables, it provided good nutritional balance and was easy to prepare. Besides being served at restaurants in the city, Yokosuka Navy Curry is now sold in packages for preparing at home.

Tokyo

Map No.13

Kanto



Tokyo-style hot-plate pancake

Monja-yaki*Griddle-fried mixed pancake*

This is the Tokyo equivalent to okonomi-yaki ("anything you like" pancakes), which are a specialty of Kansai and Hiroshima. The batter for monja-yaki is more liquid than for okonomi-yaki, and the seasonings (such as Worcestershire sauce) are mixed into the batter rather than added after cooking. Originally a between-meals snack food, monja-yaki is prepared on a wide metal hotplate in front of the diners, and is normally eaten with a small metal spatula.

Shizuoka

Map No.22

Chubu



Fried firm and flavorful

Fujinomiya Yakisoba*Fujinomiya fried noodles*

What makes the pan-fried noodles in Fujinomiya different is their firm texture. First they're given a special steam treatment, and then cooked over a hotplate with slivers of cabbage and pork oil cake. For extra flavor, just pour on the Worcestershire sauce and garnish with a sprinkle of powdered fish (sardine or mackerel).

Osaka

Map No.27

Kansai



Whatever—it's delicious

Okonomi-yaki

"Anything you like"
pancakes

Okonomi-yaki originated in the Kansai region around Osaka during the early 20th century as a snack food for children served at simple food counters. Sliced scallions and other ingredients were mixed with a basic wheat-flour batter and cooked over a griddle. After World War II, the dish caught on widely in the region. It acquired the name okonomi-yaki ("grilled whatever-you-like") because a wide variety of ingredients were used in addition to scallions, including meat, fish, shellfish and cabbage.

Hyogo

Map No.28

Kansai



Tako-yaki with a twist

Akashi-yaki

Akashi-style octopus
dumplings

The tako-yaki (grilled octopus dumplings) prepared in Akashi differ from those in Osaka in that the dough is cooked much softer and the hot plate is made of copper. The grilled octopus dumplings are served on small wooden boards, with a thin, runny Worcester-style sauce.

Osaka

Map No.27

Kansai



Is anything as Osakan as octopus?

Tako-yaki

Grilled octopus dumplings

A time-honored custom in the Osaka area is to cook wheat-flour batter in special metal hot plates with small semicircular recesses. Morsels of cooked beans, konnyaku jelly, pickles or other leftovers might be added to give extra flavor. The batter is scooped and turned while cooking to form little savory spheres. The standard filling these days is small cubes of octopus meat. Tako-yaki is an ever-popular snack food sold from street stalls.

Hyogo

Map No.28

Kansai



Superlative steak

Kobe-gyu Suteki

Kobe beef steak

Famous throughout Japan, Kobe beef is now known around the world for its marbled appearance and tender, melt-in-the-mouth texture. Only superior meat from Japanese black steer reared in Hyogo Prefecture can be classified as Kobe Beef.

Hiroshima

Map No. 34

Chugoku



Crêpe-style creations

Hiroshima Okonomi-yaki

*Hiroshima-style
"anything you like"
pancakes*

What makes Hiroshima-style okonomi-yaki distinctive is that the dough is first cooked into thin, crêpe-like pancakes, and the other ingredients are then stacked on top. Along with meat and vegetables, noodles are often added too, producing a thick, highly substantial pancake. This is usually slathered with plenty of thick, sweet-savory Worcester-style sauce.

Nagasaki

Map No. 42

Kyushu



No ordinary noodles

Champon and Sara-udon

*Noodles in broth; crispy
fried noodles*

These two noodle dishes are both made with special noodles unique to Nagasaki. For champon, seasonal ingredients such as seafood and vegetables are pan-fried in lard, then added to a broth made from chicken and pig bones. The noodles are then cooked in this soup. For sara-udon, the noodles are fried crisp in oil, then covered with a topping of seafood and other ingredients in a thick sauce. Both recipes show a strong Chinese influence.

Fukuoka

Map No. 40

Kyushu



Salty, spicy, special

Karashi-mentaiko

Spicy Alaska pollack roe

Introduced from the Korean Peninsula, this is a specialty of Hakata. The roe of the Alaska pollack is salted and marinated in a liquor spiced with red chili pepper and other seasonings. Mentaiko is eaten in many ways such as in ochazuke (rice drenched in green tea), as a filling in rice balls, or as a seasoning for spaghetti.

Nagasaki

Map No. 42

Kyushu



Hamburger heaven

Sasebo Burger

Sasebo is a port city in Nagasaki Prefecture that is home to a US naval base. Around 1950, local people were taught how to make American hamburgers, and then adapted the recipe to produce their own variations, using ingredients that were available locally. This was how the distinctive Sasebo-style burgers were created. One feature is that the burgers should always be made to order, not prepared ahead of time.

Kumamoto

Map No.43

Kyushu



School noodles

Tai-pien*Dry noodle soup*

Tai-pien is a soup containing harusame (cellophane noodles) that has become so popular in the region that it appears on school lunch menus. Pork, shrimp, squid, cabbage, carrots, onions, spring onions and other vegetables are sautéed, then poured over dry harusame. This is then covered with a soup stock simmered from chicken bones and pork bones.

Kagoshima

Map No.46

Kyushu



Swish those strips

Kurobuta no Shabushabu*Black hog shabu-shabu*

Kagoshima's specialty Berkshire black hogs have meat that is delicate and tender, with a fine texture. Because they are raised on feed containing sweet potatoes, the meat is light and tasty—savory, flavorful and sweet. Cooked in the shabu-shabu way, briefly swished around in a piping-hot broth, then dipped in soy sauce, this is the best way to enjoy the real taste of Kagoshima pork.

Miyazaki

Map No.45

Kyushu



Deep-fried delight

Chicken Nanban*Marinated deep-fried chicken*

This dish of batter-fried chicken was developed by a restaurant in Nobeoka City. The idea of garnishing it with tartar sauce was added later by a restaurant in Miyazaki City. The recipe calls for chicken meat to be dipped in a batter of wheat flour and eggs and deep-fried until it is crispy. Then it is marinated in a sweet-and-sour sauce, and seasoned with the tartar sauce.



L

ocal favorites:
a taste of
place



Now that we've whetted your appetite, let's take a closer look at some delicious dishes that are intimately linked with the region they come from.

Hokkaido

Map No.1

Hokkaido



Mutton masterpiece

Jingisukan

Genghis Khan barbecue

Strips of mutton that has been marinated in a specially prepared sauce are cooked on a helmet-shaped, conical metal griddle, with the lid tapering upwards to a point in the middle. Sheep farming developed in Hokkaido for wool, and this style of cooking was developed as a way to appreciate the delicious flavor of the meat. Usually it is served with a selection of vegetables and/or bean sprouts.

Hokkaido

Map No.1

Hokkaido



A fishermen's classic

Chanchan-yaki

Chanchan fry-up

For this classic fishermen's recipe, you need one salmon (gutted) and a whole atka mackerel, along with cabbage, mushrooms and other favorite vegetables. Chop, mix and fry over a hotplate, then add a miso-seasoned broth and simmer until it's done. You can prepare it at home or enjoy it in a local restaurant. But chanchan-yaki tastes best when it's cooked on a hot iron plate over an open fire right on the seashore.

Hokkaido

Map No.1

Hokkaido



Salmon hot pot

Ishikari-nabe

Ishikari hot pot

The name of this seafood hot pot comes from the Ishikari region of Hokkaido. The recipe was developed by local fishermen who prepared it on their boats. Chunks of salmon are simmered with a variety of ingredients, such as tofu, konnyaku jelly, Chinese cabbage, and onions in a broth flavored with savory miso. As a further seasoning, a pinch of sansho pepper is usually added.

Aomori

Map No.2

Tohoku



Seafood stew

Ichigo-ni

"Strawberry" stew

The name of this seafood stew derives from its color. Sea urchin and abalone are placed in hot water or a savory dashi broth and brought to a boil. This is seasoned with salt and a little soy sauce, and sprinkled with finely chopped green shiso herb. The pink of the sea urchin is thought to evoke the color of strawberries in the dawn mist. An essential dish on formal occasions in this part of Japan.

Aomori | *Map No.2*
Tohoku



Broken cracker soup

Sembei-jiru | *Wheat cracker soup*

A soup made with Nanbu-senbei, thin wheat crackers that are a traditional specialty of the Nanbu region of Tohoku. Seasonal vegetables and mushrooms are pan-fried, then cooked in a chicken broth seasoned with a dash of soy sauce. The crackers are broken into pieces, added to the soup and simmered some more. Nanbu-senbei crackers are also eaten on their own as a popular snack in this part of Japan.

Iwate | *Map No.3*
Tohoku



Delicious damaged dumplings

Hitsumi | *Torn dumpling stew*

Wheat flour is mixed with water, kneaded into a dough and left to stand for an hour or two. It is then rolled out into thin sheets, which are torn by hand into small pieces. These are cooked together with seasonal vegetables as a stew, and flavored with soy sauce. There are various local names for this soup, such as suiton, tsumire, tottenage, or hatto. But the common name is hitsumi (literally "torn") dumpling stew.

Iwate | *Map No.3*
Tohoku



The noodles keep coming!

Wan-ko soba | *Soba noodles in many small bowls*

This a style of eating soba (buckwheat) noodles that is traditional to the cities of Morioka and Hanamaki. The noodles are served in small lacquered bowls (wan-ko), in portions not much bigger than a mouthful, which you season with a little soy sauce and some zesty condiments. The server will keep refilling your bowl and urging you to eat more. Every year, contests are held to see who can eat the most servings of wan-ko soba in a fixed time.

Miyagi | *Map No.4*
Tohoku



Gooley, chewy, yummy

Zunda-mochi | *Sticky rice with mashed green beans*

Mochi (pounded sticky rice) is a very popular traditional food in Miyagi. The prefecture has more than 50 different ways of eating it, of which zunda-mochi is the best known. Edamame (young green soybeans from the pod) are boiled, then mashed to a paste and sweetened with sugar, with a little salt to taste. The pounded sticky rice is covered with a layer of the green soybean mash: this is zunda mochi.

Miyagi

Map No. 4

Tohoku



Savory salmon and rice

*Harako-meshi**Salmon roe rice*

A specialty of autumn in Miyagi, this dish is made from salmon caught in local rivers. First thin slices of salmon are simmered in a broth prepared from soy sauce, sake, mirin (sweet rice liquor), and sugar. The broth is then used to cook the salmon roe. Finally the salmon and roe are scattered over rice that has been cooked in the same savory broth. Harako is another word for ikura (salmon roe).

Akita

Map No. 5

Tohoku



Super stretch noodles

*Inaniwa Udon**Inaniwa udon noodles*

Inaniwa udon noodles are made not by cutting the dough, but by stretching it. Because the noodles are fine, they do not take much time to cook. They have a nice chewy texture and slip down the throat very easily. In winter, they are usually eaten in hot broth, or added to hot pots. In the heat of summer, they are eaten chilled with a dipping sauce. They are refreshing and satisfying all year round.

Akita

Map No. 5

Tohoku



Dumpling on a stick

*Kiritanpo-nabe**Cut tanpo hot pot*

Freshly boiled rice is pounded to a paste, applied to thick skewers of Akita cedar wood, and then grilled over an open charcoal fire. These cylindrical dumplings (known as tanpo) are cut into smaller portions, then simmered in a bubbling hot pot prepared from the meat of Hinai chicken (a local breed of fowl for which the prefecture is famous). Other ingredients in kiritanpo-nabe include burdock, mushrooms, scallions, and seri (water dropwort) herb. The broth is seasoned with soy sauce.

Yamagata

Map No. 6

Tohoku



From the communal cauldron

*Imo-ni**Simmered taro yam*

For more than 300 years it has been a local custom for friends to hold outdoor gatherings at which they sit around a large cauldron and eat this dish. The basic ingredients are taro yam, konnyaku jelly, and scallions, simmered together in a broth. Other ingredients vary according to locality. In inland areas, beef is added, and the broth is seasoned with soy sauce. Along the coast (the Shonai region), pork is used, with miso as a seasoning.

Yamagata

Map No.6

Tohoku

Chunky cod stew

*Dongara-jiru**Dongara stew*

This is a winter dish, prepared from gray cod. The fish is cut into large chunks, including the bones and also the head and innards. To this are added scallions and tofu that have been cooked with miso, and iwa-nori (rock laver seaweed) is used as a seasoning. Adding daikon radish and sake lees makes the stew even more warming. In Yamagata, this is a dish that is often cooked at home.

Fukushima

Map No.7

Tohoku

Choice pickled herring

*Nishin no sansho-zuke**Herring with sansho pepper*

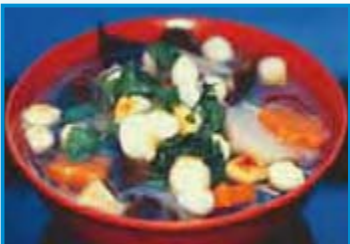
A traditional way to prepare herring so that it can be eaten year-round. The fish are first opened, cleaned, and dried. Then they are layered with leaves of sansho pepper in between and pickled in a liquor prepared from soy sauce, sake, vinegar, and sugar. In the old days, special ceramic serving bowls for pickled herring were used in the Aizu-Wakamatsu region, and were an integral part of a bride's trousseau. They are still produced by local ceramics craftsmen.

Fukushima

Map No.7

Tohoku

Auspicious country cuisine

*Ko-zuyu**Ko soup*

This clear soup is an essential dish served on auspicious occasions, such as at the new year, and at other ceremonial gatherings. It is made from dried scallop holdfasts, which are softened in dashi stock. Other ingredients include wheat gluten croutons (mame-fu), shiitake mushrooms, carrots, taro yams, kikurage fungus, and konnyaku jelly noodles. It is seasoned with soy sauce, salt, and sake, and should be served in bowls of red lacquer produced in Aizu-Wakamatsu.

Ibaraki

Map No.8

Kanto

Classic winter fish dish

*Anko-ryori**Anko dishes*

According to an old saying there are two classic winter hot pot dishes in Japan: pufferfish in the west of the country and anglerfish in the east. It is commonly said that apart from the bones, the whole of the anglerfish can be eaten. The best-known recipe is anglerfish hot pot, but other dishes include prepared anglerfish with a vinegar dressing and "mud broth" (using only the fish and vegetables, without adding any water).

Ibaraki

Map No.8

Kanto



Goopy and crunchy

*Soboro-natto**Savory soybeans*

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

Tochigi

Map No.9

Kanto



Summer mushrooms and noodles

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

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

Tochigi

Map No.9

Kanto



Flavor that's stood the test of time

*Shimo-tsukare**Salmon and vegetable stew*

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

Gunma

Map No.10

Kanto



Nutritious evening noodles

*Okkirikomi**Coarse-cut udon noodles*

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

Gunma

Map No. 10

Kanto



Healthy jelly

Namaimo Konnyaku ryori | Konnyaku jelly

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

Saitama

Map No. 10

Kanto



Steamed bun snack

Iga-manju | "Chestnut" steamed buns

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

Saitama

Map No. 11

Kanto



Midday farm favorite

Hiyajiru-udon | Udon noodles in cold broth

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

Chiba

Map No. 12

Kanto



Illustrated sushi

Futomaki-zushi | Thick-rolled sushi

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

Chiba

Map No. 12

Kanto



Sesame sardines

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

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

Tokyo

Map No. 13

Kanto



King of fish?

*Kusaya**Stinky fish*

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

Tokyo

Map No. 13

Kanto



Deep-fried clams on rice

*Fukagawa-don**Rice bowl with clams*

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

Kanagawa

Map No. 14

Kanto



Festive sweet dumplings

*Herahera-dango**Herahera dumplings*

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

Kanagawa

Map No. 14

Kanto



Grilled seasonal vegetables

Kanko-yaki*Grilled wild plants*

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

Niigata

Map No. 15

Chubu



Perfect picnic sushi

Sasa-zushi*Sushi wrapped in bamboo leaves*

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

Niigata

Map No. 15

Chubu



Thick vegetable soup

Noppei-jiru*Noppei soup*

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

Toyama

Map No. 16

Chubu



Trout fit for a shogun

Masu-zushi*Trout sushi*

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

Toyama

Map No. 16

Chubu



The king of winter

Buri-daikon*Yellowtail with daikon radish*

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

Ishikawa

Map No. 17

Chubu



Duck delicacy

Jibu-ni*Jibu soup*

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

Ishikawa

Map No. 17

Chubu



Pickled perfection

Kabura-zushi*Pickled yellowtail with turnip*

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

Fukui

Map No. 18

Chubu



Longevity noodles

Echizen oroshi soba*Soba noodles with grated daikon*

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

Fukui

Map No.18

Chubu



Fishy snack

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

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

Nagano

Map No.20

Chubu



Handmade heaven

Shinshu soba*Shinshu soba noodles*

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

Yamanashi

Map No.19

Chubu



Hot on vegetables

Hoto*Hot pot with udon noodles*

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

Nagano

Map No.20

Chubu



Farmhouse dumplings

Oyaki*Grilled dumplings*

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

Gifu

Map No.21

Chubu

Nutty sweets

Kuri-kinton

Chestnut balls



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

Shizuoka

Map No.22

Chubu

Deep-fried mini-shrimp

Sakuraebi no kaki-age

Shrimp fritters



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

Gifu

Map No.21

Chubu

Tasty paste

Hoba miso

Ho leaf miso



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

Shizuoka

Map No.22

Chubu

Lean eel

Unagi no kabayaki

Broiled and seasoned eel



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

Aichi

Map No.23

Chubu



Grilled eel and rice

*Hitsu-mabushi**Eel in a tub*

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

Mie

Map No.24

Kansai



Pilgrim's choice

*Ise udon**Ise-style udon noodles*

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

Aichi

Map No.23

Chubu



Hearty miso stew

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

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

Mie

Map No.24

Kansai



Fisherman's sushi

*Tekone-zushi**Strewn sushi*

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

Shiga

Map No.25

Kansai



Forerunner of sushi

Funa-zushi

Preserved carp

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

Kyoto

Map No.26

Kansai



Pick the perfect pickle

Kyo tsukemono

Kyoto pickles

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

Shiga

Map No.25

Kansai



Delicious duck

Kamo nabe

Duck hot pot

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

Kyoto

Map No.26

Kansai



Eggplant excellence

Kamonasu no dengaku

*Broiled eggplant
with miso*

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

Osaka

Map No.27

Kansai

Super slices of sushi cake

Hako-zushi
Boxed sushi


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

Hyogo

Map No.28

Kansai

Wild boar fit to feed an army

Botan nabe
"Peony" hot pot


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

Osaka

Map No.27

Kansai

Magnificent mochi soup

Shiromiso zoni
White miso soup with mochi


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

Hyogo

Map No.28

Kansai

Nails that hit the spot

Ikanago no kugi-ni
Cooked sand eel "nails"


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

Nara

Map No.29

Kansai



Rice and mackerel masterpiece

Kaki-no-ha-zushi | *Persimmon leaf sushi*

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

Wakayama

Map No.30

Kansai



Traditional picnic lunch

Mehari-zushi | *Leaf-wrapped "sushi"*

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

Nara

Map No.29

Kansai



Super-slender snow-white noodles

Miwa somen | *Miwa somen noodles*

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

Tottori

Map No.31

Chugoku



Fine crab—and you won't feel the pinch

Kani-jiru | *Crabmeat soup*

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

Tottori

Map No.31

Chugoku

Flying fish cylinders

Ago no yaki*Flying fish grill*

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

Shimane

Map No.32

Chugoku

Tasty clam cuisine

Shijimi-jiru*Fresh-water clam soup*

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

Shimane

Map No.32

Chugoku

Soba with the sauce on

Izumo soba*Izumo-style
soba noodles*

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

Okayama

Map No.33

Chugoku

Sushi as a work of art

Bara-zushi*Strewn sushi*

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

Okayama

Map No.33

Chugoku



These fish are just too good!

Mamakari-zushi*Shad sushi*

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

Hiroshima

Map No.34

Chugoku



Lunchbox conger

Anago meshi*Rice with conger eel*

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

Hiroshima

Map No.34

Chugoku



Outstanding oyster dish

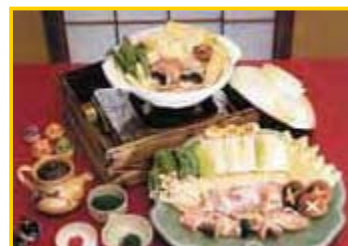
Kaki no dote nabe*Oyster hot pot with miso*

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

Yamaguchi

Map No.35

Chugoku



See-through pufferfish

Fuku (fugu) ryori*Pufferfish dishes*

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

Yamaguchi

Map No.35

Chugoku



Pressed sushi delicacy

*Iwakuni-zushi**Iwakuni sushi*

This form of pressed sushi is popular in the Iwakuni area. Cuts of fish meat are layered with vinegared rice and pressed into wooden molds, then scattered with shredded omelet, slices of lotus root, and seasoned shiitake mushrooms. Banana leaves are used to keep the layers separate.

Tokushima

Map No.36

Shikoku



Whole fish sushi specialty

*Boze no sugata-zushi**Butterfish sushi*

A popular way to eat fish in Tokushima Prefecture: the whole fish is cleaned and stuffed with vinegared sushi rice. The butterfish is first soaked in vinegar, then packed with vinegared rice seasoned with a splash of fresh-pressed sudachi citron juice. This is an essential item at autumn festivals and is still made in local households to this day. Other fish prepared in the sugata-zushi style include horse mackerel, sweetfish, and freshwater trout.

Tokushima

Map No.36

Shikoku



Porridge option

*Sobamai-zosui**Buckwheat porridge*

Buckwheat grain that has been boiled, dried, and husked is cooked to produce a thick porridge. Buckwheat is an important crop in Tokushima Prefecture because it has a short growing time, and the terrain and climate are not suitable for rice cultivation. Besides porridge, buckwheat is also eaten in the form of soba noodles.

Kagawa

Map No.37

Shikoku



Noodles in the kingdom of udon

*Sanuki udon**Sanuki udon noodles*

Per capita consumption of udon noodles is higher in Kagawa than anywhere else in Japan. Sanuki udon is made from wheat dough that is thoroughly kneaded to create firm noodles. These are eaten in a variety of ways: in a savory noodle soup, served in hot water with a separate dipping sauce, chilled with a separate dip, hot with various toppings, or with a dip of plain soy sauce. As well as being a festive food, Sanuki udon is part of everyday life throughout Kagawa.

Kagawa

Map No.37

Shikoku



Zoom in on an unusual zoni

An-mochi zoni*Elaborate zoni*

This unusual version of zoni (soup with pounded sticky-rice cakes) features round slices of daikon radish and carrot cooked in a soup prepared from fish broth, along with a mochi cake stuffed with sweetened mashed azuki beans (an-mochi). The soup is seasoned with white miso. The an-mochi tradition dates from the days when sugar was such a luxury that it could only be used on special occasions such as New Year banquets, when zoni soup is served.

Ehime

Map No.38

Shikoku



Great value snack

Jakoten*Deep-fried fish cakes*

Small fish caught in coastal waters are ground to a paste, including the bones and skin, formed into oval shapes, and deep-fried. Nutritious and affordable, jakoten is a popular afternoon snack in this area.

Ehime

Map No.38

Shikoku



Special sashimi

Uwajima tai meshi*Uwajima snapper rice*

Red snapper (tai) caught off the shores of Uwajima is a traditional local delicacy. Cuts of the sashimi are dipped in a special sauce made from raw egg, seaweed, and sesame seeds, and eaten with steaming-hot rice.

Kochi

Map No.39

Shikoku



Seared perfection

Katsuo no tataki*Seared raw skipjack*

Tosa (the old name for Kochi) is renowned for its skipjack tuna (katsuo; also called bonito in English). Raw fillets of the freshly caught fish are seared over a fire (traditionally made from burning straw), then sliced and eaten with grated ginger or other condiments. People on the coast use different condiments from those living inland. But throughout the region, tataki is an essential course in meals served when entertaining guests.

Kochi

Map No.37

Shikoku

Platters piled high with freshness

Sawachi ryori*Heaped seafood platter*

Wide platters are heaped up with a variety of freshly caught seafood until they can hold no more. Whenever a celebration is held in Kochi, this is the centerpiece of the banquet.

Fukuoka

Map No.40

Kyushu

Nourishing broth

Game-ni*Mixed vegetables with chicken*

Also known as Chikuzen-ni (Chikuzen is the old name for the Fukuoka region), this dish features morsels of chicken, root vegetables, and konnyaku jelly simmered in a broth seasoned with soy sauce, sugar, and mirin. Healthy and nourishing, game-ni was originally served on ceremonial occasions but is now part of the daily diet.

Fukuoka

Map No.40

Kyushu

Savoring every last drop

Mizutaki*Chicken hot pot*

One of the best-known specialties of Fukuoka Prefecture. Chicken including skin and bones is coarsely chopped, placed in cold water, and slowly brought to a boil. This is eaten with a ponzu dip, a zesty mix of soy sauce with citron juice. When the ingredients have been eaten, the leftover soup is cooked up with rice to make porridge, or poured over rice (similar to chazuke; tea over cooked rice).

Saga

Map No.41

Kyushu

Sushi fit for a lord

Suko-zushi*Suko sushi*

Pressed sushi made with local Shiroishi rice and topped with slices of raw fish freshly caught from the nearby Ariake Sea. The fish is divided into portions about 10 cm square and decorated with colorful slivers of vegetables. This is a traditional recipe dating back some 500 years, first prepared by farmers as an offering to the local lord of the Suko region.

Nagasaki

Map No. 42

Kyushu



Cross-cultural cuisine

Shippoku ryori

Shippoku cooking

During the Edo Period, Nagasaki was the only Japanese port open to trade with the outside world and developed a cosmopolitan character. The shippoku ryori style of cooking was adapted from traditional formal banquets in ancient China. Circular tables are arranged with a mix of Japanese delicacies, Chinese-style dishes, and also foods introduced by European traders.

Kumamoto

Map No. 43

Kyushu



Yam for tea today

Ikinari-dago

Sweet potato treats

A local specialty with a local name: dumplings are made from round slices of sweet potato encased simply ("ikinari" in the dialect) in wheat-flour dough and then steamed. This was a popular afternoon snack during the years following the end of World War II, when food was in short supply.

Nagasaki

Map No. 42

Kyushu



Zoni in the mixed zone

Gu-zoni

Mixed zoni soup

This is a traditional soup made in the Shimabara region of Nagasaki. Besides pounded sticky-rice cakes (mochi), it also includes morsels of meat, slices of pounded fish cake, and a selection of vegetables. It is served at New Year's, and also at ceremonial events and formal celebrations throughout the year.

Kumamoto

Map No. 43

Kyushu



Crisp and spicy

Karashi renkon

Spicy lotus root

A traditional recipe with a history of more than 300 years. First, a spicy mixture of miso and chili pepper is stuffed into a lotus root. This is wrapped in a turmeric-yellow wheat-flour dough that is deep-fried and cut into round slices. The crisp texture of the lotus root is complemented by the spiciness of the chili pepper.

Oita

Map No. 44

Kyushu



Fishermen's fare from the islands

Buri no atsumeshi | *Yellowtail with hot rice*

Slices of raw yellowtail are marinated in soy sauce mixed with sake, sugar, and vinegar, then served on hot rice in a large bowl. Condiments include chopped scallions, nori seaweed, and sesame seeds. Sometimes the whole thing is eaten with green tea or soup stock poured over it. This traditional fishermen's food is also known as "Ryukyu" (the traditional name for Okinawa), from where it was introduced.

Oita

Map No. 44

Kyushu



Stretched dumplings

Tenobe dango-jiru | *Hand-made dumpling soup*

Wheat flour is kneaded with some salt and warm water to form a dough, then torn into small pieces and stretched to form strings. Known as tenobe dango ("hand-stretched dumplings"), they are added to a dashi broth prepared from iriko (dried small fish). Other ingredients may include shiitake mushrooms and burdock. The soup is seasoned with miso and garnished with scallions and seri (Japanese parsley).

Oita

Map No. 44

Kyushu



Preserving fish traditions

Gomadashi udon | *Noodles in sesame broth*

White-meat fish is grilled and crushed, and mixed with soy sauce and sesame seeds to form a savory broth. This is poured over cooked udon (wheat noodles). Because the broth keeps well, this was originally a traditional recipe in fishing communities where it was prepared when there were large catches of fish to preserve.

Miyazaki

Map No. 45

Kyushu



Charcoal chicken

Jidori no sumibiyaki | *Char-grilled chicken*

Chicken meat is cut into morsels, sprinkled with salt and pepper, then grilled at a high heat over charcoal until the meat is charred black. Local people love the flavor of the charcoal on the meat.

Miyazaki

Map No. 45

Kyushu



Cool home-cooked goodness

Hiya-jiru*Chilled miso soup*

A traditional dish prepared in homes in Miyazaki. Small fish are grilled, crushed in a mortar and blended with a mix of ground sesame seeds and miso. The resulting paste is smeared over the surface of a large soup bowl, then held over a flame until it is lightly browned. The paste is mixed with cold cooking stock, together with slices of cucumber and chopped green shiso herb, and finally the chilled soup is ladled over cooked rice mixed with barley.

Kagoshima

Map No. 46

Kyushu



Versatile little fish

Kibinago ryori*Kibinago dishes*

Kibinago is a small, silver-skinned fish that is plentiful in the waters off Kagoshima Prefecture. It is eaten in many ways: as sashimi served with a dip of vinegared miso, grilled and salted, simmered, deep-fried, or in soups. One of the best-known preparations is kikka-zukuri—sashimi arranged in concentric circles in the shape of a chrysanthemum.

Kagoshima

Map No. 46

Kyushu



Morsels, shreds, and slices

Kei-ban*Chicken rice*

To a piping-hot bowl of rice in a bowl are added morsels of chicken breast meat, shreds of omelet, and slices of savory-sweet shiitake. Finely chopped pickled papaya and the dried peel of shima mikan (tiny mandarin oranges) are sprinkled on top. Pour in plenty of hot chicken broth and enjoy like chazuke (rice with hot tea poured over it).

Kagoshima

Map No. 46

Kyushu



Fabulous fish cakes

Tsuke-age*Deep-fried fish cake*

Fish is pounded and formed into a paste, and then deep-fried in bite-sized cakes. This recipe was introduced to Kagoshima from the islands of Okinawa, where it is known as chiki-agi. Elsewhere in Japan it is known as Satsuma-age after the old name of the Kagoshima region (Satsuma).

Okinawa

Map No.47

Okinawa



Island pork and noodles

Okinawa soba

*Okinawan
wheat noodles*

The soba noodles eaten in Okinawa are made of wheat (not buckwheat). After cooking, they are moistened with oil and served in a broth prepared from pork bones and bonito flakes. Slices of pork, fish paste, and chopped scallions are often served on top. The most popular variation is called soki soba, which includes cuts of pork rib.

Okinawa

Map No.47

Okinawa



Healthy jet-black soup

Ikasumi-jiru

Squid ink soup

Squid and pork meat are simmered in a stock prepared from bonito (skipjack). Then, as a final touch, squid ink is added, turning the soup pitch-black. Squid ink has long been thought to have medicinal properties that can rid the body of toxins. In the old days in Okinawa, it was traditional to feed babies with this squid ink soup as their first meal.

Okinawa

Map No.47

Okinawa



Best bitter mix

Goya champuru

*Tofu mixed
with bitter melon*

In the Okinawan dialect champuru means "mixture." Goya champuru is a stir-fried mixture of sliced goya (bitter melon) and local tofu, with slices of pork. It is so popular it is considered the staple dish of Okinawa.

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