

Dishii!

Oishi!

JAPANESE
FOOD
STYLE

*Manami
Okazaki*

Prestel
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Introduction

Japanese food is typically described as a 'feast for the eyes': visual poetry, allure and sophistication of presentation are as important as taste. The nation's cuisine is an expression of many societal customs and visual sensibilities; the beauty of its colours and physical arrangements can create an exquisite sensory experience for diners. Japanese food incorporates influences from various cultures, but at the same time utilizes the best of what the country's land and sea have to offer. It also exists within a cultural context that has long prized hospitality, craftsmanship, seasonality and aesthetics.

A crucial characteristic of Japanese cuisine is its focus on the natural flavours of fresh, local ingredients. As an island country with a diversity of natural landscapes entirely surrounded by the ocean, Japan is abundant with spectacular seafood. The archipelago is also mountainous, and each region has its own woodland specialities. Those who work with food in Japan focus on highlighting the flavours within the ingredients, and so access to high-quality produce is of paramount importance.

INTRODUCTION



Japanese restaurant culture began to flourish during the Edo era. Nowadays, Tokyo is filled with small eateries.



While Tokyo is known for high-end gastronomy, the city is rife with unpretentious, intimate restaurants where locals dine.

A late-night soba store. Eateries like this are a common sight in Japanese cities.



In Japan, food is seen as a way to visually showcase nature: to incorporate the inherent beauty of its gifts, and to express seasonality and the shifts between the four seasons. Everything, from the ingredients to the garnishes, from flowers to tableware, celebrates summer, autumn, winter and spring. Naturally, seasonal differences between various regions result in a wide range of food. For example, the tropics of Okinawa boast cuisine unlike that of the frigid, snowy landscapes of Northern Honshu and Hokkaido, where intense cold necessitates preservation methods not found in other parts of Japan. Many of these techniques, such as fermentation, are based on folk wisdom passed down through the generations.



Temari (hand ball) sushi from Aoki, considered to be the best in Tokyo.



Japanese food is as much about procuring excellent produce as it is about cooking.