

Living in Japan Guide

Food Guide

Discovering Japanese Food, Dining Culture, and Everyday Grocery Shopping

Prepared by JP Supports

Welcome

One of the most exciting parts of living in Japan is experiencing its incredible food culture. Japanese cuisine is famous around the world for its freshness, variety, and attention to detail. Whether you enjoy traditional Japanese meals or prefer international cuisine, Japan offers something for everyone.

As a newcomer, understanding where to eat, how restaurants work, food etiquette, grocery shopping, and dietary considerations will help you settle into daily life more comfortably.

This guide introduces Japanese food culture, popular dishes, dining etiquette, convenience stores, supermarkets, food allergies, and practical tips to help you enjoy your culinary journey in Japan.

Japanese Food Culture

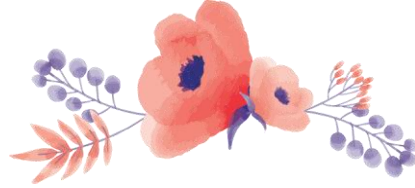
Food plays an important role in Japanese society. Meals are often prepared with fresh ingredients, balanced nutrition, and beautiful presentation. Japanese people value seasonal ingredients, cleanliness, and minimizing food waste.

Unlike many countries, restaurants in Japan are generally quiet and organized. Customers are expected to respect others by keeping conversations at a moderate volume and following restaurant etiquette.

Before eating, it is customary to say:

いただきます (Itadakimasu)





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This expression means "I humbly receive this meal" and shows appreciation for everyone involved in preparing the food.

After finishing your meal, it is polite to say:

ごちそうさまでした (**Gochisousama Deshita**)

This means "Thank you for the delicious meal."

Popular Japanese Dishes

Japan offers a wide variety of delicious foods.

Some of the most popular dishes include:

Sushi

Fresh seafood served with vinegared rice. Sushi ranges from simple rolls to premium seafood specialties.

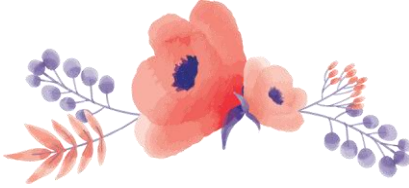
Ramen

A noodle soup available in many regional styles, including:

- Shoyu (Soy Sauce)
- Miso
- Tonkotsu (Pork Bone)
- Shio (Salt)

Each region in Japan has its own unique ramen flavor.





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Udon

Thick wheat noodles served in hot broth or chilled with dipping sauce.

Soba

Thin buckwheat noodles enjoyed either hot or cold.

Curry Rice

Japanese curry is sweeter and thicker than many other curries and is commonly served with rice.

Tempura

Seafood and vegetables coated in a light batter and deep-fried until crispy.

Bento

A boxed meal containing rice, vegetables, meat or fish, and side dishes.

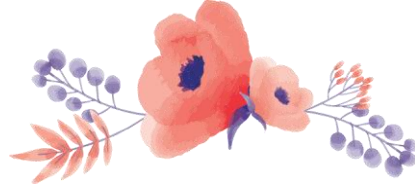
Bento boxes are popular for work, school, and travel.

Donburi

A rice bowl topped with ingredients such as:

- Beef
 - Chicken
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- Pork
- Seafood
- Eggs

Convenience Stores (Konbini)

Convenience stores are an essential part of everyday life in Japan.

Popular chains include:

- 7-Eleven
- FamilyMart
- Lawson

These stores are open 24 hours in many locations and offer much more than snacks.

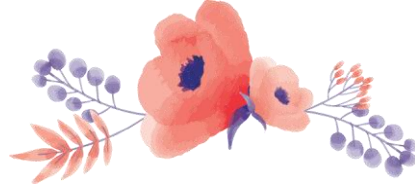
You can purchase:

- Fresh meals
- Sandwiches
- Bento boxes
- Drinks
- Coffee
- Desserts
- Fresh fruit
- Stationery
- Household supplies

Many convenience stores also provide:

- ATM services
- Bill payments
- Parcel collection
- Ticket purchases
- Mobile phone top-ups





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They are clean, affordable, and incredibly convenient for busy lifestyles.

Supermarkets

Shopping at supermarkets is one of the best ways to save money.

Most supermarkets sell:

- Fresh vegetables
- Fruits
- Seafood
- Meat
- Rice
- Noodles
- Dairy products
- Frozen foods
- Bakery items

Many stores offer evening discounts on prepared meals and fresh products. Visiting after 6:00 PM can often help you save money.

Always bring your own reusable shopping bag, as many stores charge for plastic bags.

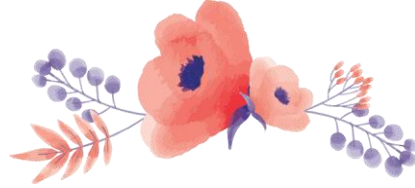
Eating Out in Japan

Japan has restaurants for every budget.

You will find:

- Sushi restaurants
 - Ramen shops
 - Cafés
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- Family restaurants
- Fast food chains
- Izakaya (Japanese pubs)
- International restaurants

Many restaurants display plastic food models or photographs outside, making it easier to choose meals even if you cannot read Japanese.

Some restaurants use vending machines where customers purchase meal tickets before ordering.

Food Allergies and Dietary Requirements

If you have allergies or dietary restrictions, always check ingredient labels carefully.

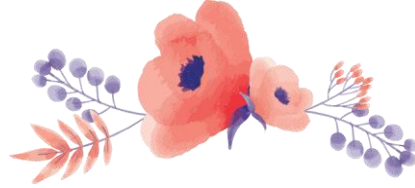
Common allergens include:

- Eggs
- Milk
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Shrimp
- Crab
- Soy
- Fish

If you are vegetarian, vegan, or require halal meals, larger cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Yokohama offer many suitable restaurants.

Translation cards explaining your dietary needs can also be very helpful when dining out.





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Drinking Water

Japan has some of the cleanest drinking water in the world.

In most areas, tap water is safe to drink unless otherwise indicated.

You can also purchase bottled water at convenience stores, supermarkets, and vending machines throughout the country.

Japanese Dining Etiquette

Following local dining customs shows respect for Japanese culture.

Some important etiquette includes:

- Say "Itadakimasu" before eating.
- Say "Gochisousama Deshita" after finishing.
- Wait until everyone is served before eating.
- Use chopsticks correctly.
- Keep your phone away while eating.
- Return dishes neatly after your meal.

Good manners are appreciated wherever you dine.

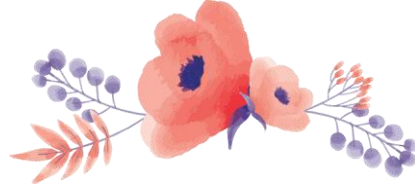
Chopstick Etiquette

Chopsticks are used for most Japanese meals.

Avoid these common mistakes:

- Do not stick chopsticks upright into a bowl of rice.
- Do not point at people using chopsticks.





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- Do not pass food directly from one person's chopsticks to another.
- Do not play with chopsticks while eating.

When not using them, place your chopsticks on the provided holder or across your bowl.

Saving Money on Food

Living in Japan does not have to be expensive.

Some ways to reduce food costs include:

- Cook meals at home.
- Buy groceries in bulk.
- Shop during evening discount hours.
- Use supermarket loyalty cards.
- Purchase seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Compare prices between stores.

Preparing meals at home is usually much more affordable than eating out every day.

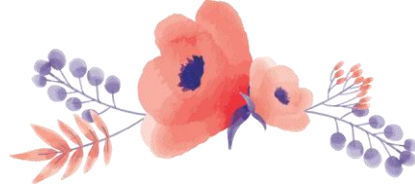
Emergency Food Information

If you have severe allergies or medical conditions, carry an allergy information card written in Japanese.

This can help restaurant staff understand your dietary requirements during emergencies.

Also remember to keep bottled water and non-perishable food as part of your emergency preparedness kit in case of earthquakes or other natural disasters.





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Need Help Preparing for Life in Japan?

Understanding Japanese food and culture is only one part of preparing for your journey. If you are planning to move to Japan from **Sri Lanka**, **JP Supports** proudly works with our trusted Sri Lankan consultation partner:

Moshi Moshi Nippon

Website: <https://moshimoshinippon.com/>

Their experienced team can provide guidance on:

- Student Visa Consultation
- Work Visa Consultation
- Japan Travel Preparation
- Pre-Departure Guidance
- Living in Japan Advice
- Cultural Orientation
- Document Preparation Support
- General Information for Students and Workers

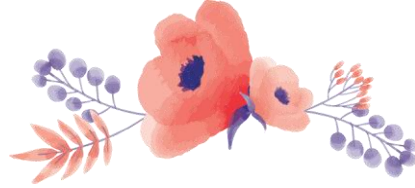
Whether you are moving to Japan for education, employment, or a new career opportunity, professional guidance can help make your transition smoother and more enjoyable.

Please note: Food availability, restaurant menus, and dietary accommodations vary by region and establishment. Consultation services provide general guidance and relocation support but cannot guarantee specific food options or dietary services.

For more information or to schedule a consultation, visit:

 <https://moshimoshinippon.com/>





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About JP Supports

JP Supports is committed to helping international students, professionals, and newcomers build successful lives in Japan. Through reliable guides, practical resources, and trusted partnerships, we strive to make your relocation experience easier, safer, and more informed.

Conclusion

Japanese food is much more than just delicious meals—it is an important part of the country's culture and everyday life. By learning basic dining etiquette, exploring local supermarkets, trying traditional dishes, and understanding food customs, you will gain a deeper appreciation for life in Japan.

Don't be afraid to try something new. Every meal is an opportunity to experience Japanese culture, meet new people, and create lasting memories. We hope this guide helps you enjoy every bite of your journey in Japan. Welcome, and **いただきます (Itadakimasu)!**

