

Processed Marine Foods that Evoke Japanese Food Culture – Part 3

Salted-Dried Items

This refers to seafood preserved in salt or salted and dried. Maruboshi preparation uses the whole fish; gutted fish are used for preparing hiraki-boshi. This is a staple breakfast item in Japanese households.

“Hiraki”, Open Dried Fish



Hiraki refers to a processed item made by slicing the fish part-way through its stomach or back and spreading the body open. The fish is then soaked in salt water and dried in the sun. Sun-drying removes the moisture from the flesh and concentrates the umami, enabling longer preservation. Usually, hiraki is simply grilled before serving.

“Aramaki Salmon”, Salt-cured Salmon



Aramaki salmon is a processed item made by thoroughly rubbing gutted salmon with salt and then leaving it for several days before washing away the salt and drying. Salmon used to be an expensive fish and those that were processed for use as New Year gifts were called aramaki salmon. To this day, in some regions, it is still enjoyed at New Year, and on other special occasions, as a food item that is believed to bring good fortune.

“Maruboshi”, Whole Dried Fish



Maruboshi refers to small fish, such as round herrings and anchovies, which have been dried in the sun. The fish are placed in a bamboo basket or pierced through the eyes with half-split chopsticks, then left out to dry for four to five days. Maruboshi can be cooked and eaten “as is” or used to make dashi stock for a variety of dishes.

“Ichiya-boshi”, Overnight-dried Fish



Ichiya-boshi are thin-bodied marine species, such as sardines and squid, which are lightly salted and left to dry overnight. Usually, the fish is set out to dry in the late afternoon, then brought back inside the next morning. Compared with daytime sun-drying, this method allows the flesh to retain some moisture. Although fish dried overnight will not keep as long as sun-dried fish, you can enjoy a texture that is closer to that of raw fish.

Processed Marine Foods that Evoke Japanese Food Culture – Part 4

Delicacies

These are processed foods that use marine products as ingredients and preserve their unique flavors. There are a number that uses rare ingredients from a particular region or ingredients that have unique flavors, and many consumers find them very “more-ish” . They also go well with Japanese sake.

“Shiokara”, Salted-Cured Seafood



This refers to cured marine food products that are made by preserving the flesh, innards, and roe in salt. The curing process is promoted by the natural enzymes in the ingredients, to which are added further enzymes such as koji (rice malt). Formerly, shiokara was made as a preserved sake food item. These days, it is popular as a snack to accompany sake.

“Hotate Kaibashira”, Scallop’s Adductor Muscle (Marinated Scallop in Smoked Oil)



Hotate scallops are regularly harvested from Japan’s northern waters. They are also widely farmed. Fresh northern scallops can be eaten raw. Scallop meat is used in various ways, including grilled dishes, stews, and soups, and it is a popular ingredient in many Japanese homes. Scallops can also be dried and used to make dashi or enjoyed as a snack.

“Sakiika”, Shredded Dried Squid



Sakiika refers to a processed food made by broiling dried raw squid, stretching the squid out and then tearing it into thin pieces for use as snacks to accompany sake, frying in tempura, or as a cooking ingredient. Sakiika products are offered with a variety of flavorings.

“Saketoba”, Dried Salmon Jerky



Saketoba is made by filleting and salting headed and gutted salmon and then drying it by exposure to a cool breeze. This is a traditional dried food product from Hokkaido which is reputed to have been invented by the indigenous Ainu people. It has a chewy texture and the more you chew it, the more flavor you get. So, it is perfect as a snack to accompany sake.