

Japanese Marine Products Intrinsic to Everyday Living – Part 1

Ready-Made Seafood Dishes

Precooked products are a boon to busy homemakers. Because the ingredients are cooked while still fresh, the products retain their delicious natural flavors. Another advantage is that you can easily enjoy flavors unique to various regions in the comfort of your own home.

“Ikameshi”, Rice-stuffed Squid



To create this local dish from the Oshima region of Hokkaido, the tentacles and innards of the squid are removed, the body is filled with washed rice and then cooked in a soy sauce-based dashi stock. The fragrant rice absorbs the flavor of this popular dish, which is now enjoyed nationwide. It is satisfyingly filling and there are many types with good preservability that you can order for delivery to your door.

Canned Items



This refers to processed marine products packed in cans. They are easy to use, convenient, and can be eaten straight from the can or added as an accent to various dishes. In addition to the staple items of canned salmon and boiled mackerel, a wide variety of products are available, including boiled scallops and shredded scallops. Canned items can be stored at room temperature with the delicious flavors preserved for years.

Fried Items



With fried fish, you can enjoy both the softness of the ingredients and the crispy texture of the batter and breading. Fried horse mackerel, squid, and white fish are popular items that are often seen on the dinner table. The wide choice includes products that are pre-prepared and only need to be fried in oil or individually heated up in the microwave oven.

Grilled Fish for Microwave Cooking



These are processed fish that are already pre-flavored or have been deboned, allowing you to enjoy authentic flavors after quick-heating in the microwave oven. There are many items that are popularly served in Japan, such as salmon and Spanish mackerel, and items from famous shops that make great gifts. Also available are convenience products for use in bento lunches.

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Nutritional Ingredients

Seafood and seaweed are rich not only in vitamins and calcium but also in superior nutrients, such as EPA and DHA, which are effective in helping to ward off lifestyle illnesses. A number of fish-derived supplements take advantage of these characteristics.

DHA



In addition to lowering neutral fat and cholesterol, DHA is vitally important to brain function. It is also believed to be necessary for healthy growth in children. The most effective way to obtain DHA is to eat sashimi made with blueback fish but there are also supplements that make it easy to obtain fish-derived DHA.

Collagen



This is an important component of not only skin but also several other elements of the human body, including bones, blood vessels and muscles. Collagen deficiency can lead to a reduction in cell numbers. Collagen can be roughly divided into two types — animal-derived and fish-derived — and it is believed that collagen derived from fish has a smaller molecular weight and is thus more easily absorbed.

Umami

As a base for Japanese cuisine, some representative umami components include glutamic acid in kelp and inosinic acid found in dried bonito. It is said that combining these ingredients makes the umami even stronger.

“Itokezuri”, Thread-shaved Dried Tuna



Dried tuna with the dark meat removed is finely shaved into thread-like pieces and used as a topping on Japanese dishes. The color is a little paler than the shaved flakes of dried bonito and it is smooth and fine but has a robust flavor. It is perceived as being high-grade and is often used in special dishes when entertaining guests.

“Dashi”, Seafood Soup Stock



Dashi is an essential item that forms the foundation of flavor in Japanese cuisine. It is made by extracting umami components and aroma from such marine food items as dried bonito flakes and kelp. The process of extracting dashi stock from matured food items is said to be unique to Japanese food culture and there are numerous products in powdered or bagged form that provide the convenience of simply adding them to a pot to provide the authentic flavors of dashi.