

# Japanese Produce

## Leaf Vegetables:



**Cabbage** is an inexpensive, versatile vegetable used to add nutrition and flavor and can be added to just about any dish, from soups and stews to pan-fried meals and side salads.



**Hakusai (Chinese cabbage)** is popular in many parts of Asia, where it is often pickled. In Korea, hakusai is the cabbage variety usually used to make kimchi, the nation's most famous dish. Furthermore, fresh hakusai is a very popular ingredient in hot pot (nabe) dishes.



**Horensō (spinach)** enjoys popularity thanks to its health benefits and variety of vitamins, being particularly rich in calcium and iron. A well-known horensō dish is horensō no goma-ae (spinach with sesame dressing), which involves blanching the horensō and then mixing it with a sweet, soy sauce and sesame flavored dressing. Horensō is also used as a topping in soups.



**Komatsuna (Japanese mustard spinach)** is similar to spinach and bok choy but it does not have the same bitterness as spinach. Komatsuna is commonly eaten raw in salads or boiled and served in soups and stews. It can also be pickled.



**Mizuna (Japanese mustard, spider mustard)** has recently become very popular as a salad leaf. Mizuna may appear in soups or Japanese hot pot (nabe), or as a garnish on various dishes.



**Shiso (Perilla leaf)** is a mint-like herb whose distinctive flavor is a staple in Japanese cooking. It comes in two varieties which are used for different purposes. Aojiso (green shiso) is often served with sashimi, in salads or to flavor soups and stews. Akajiso (red shiso) is used to pickle Japanese plums and add color to dishes.

Root Vegetables:



**Daikon (giant white radish)** can be eaten raw or cooked or grated into daikon-oroshi, a refreshing topping used to counteract the oiliness of dishes like grilled fish and tempura. When used raw, daikon is usually cut into julienne strips and paired with mizuna leaves in a salad. When cooked, daikon is usually boiled in soups, stews or hot pot (nabe) dishes. Known as takuan, pickled daikon is included in virtually every dish of Japanese pickles.



**Kabu (turnip)** is almost always boiled and served in soups or Japanese hot pot, (nabe). It is a common miso soup ingredient and is often used to make pickles. Kabu usually have a spicier taste than Western varieties.



**Jagaimo (potato)** are popular in several Japanese dishes and adapted Western dishes. Jagaimo are also common in Japanese curry and croquette.



**Satsumaimo (sweet potato)** were originally grown in Kagoshima, formerly called Satsuma. They are a popular winter vegetable used in both sweet and savory dishes.



**Satoimo (taro root)** are eaten throughout Asia, especially in India, China, Korea and Japan. They are a starchy root vegetable known for their somewhat sticky, slimy texture. Satoimo are always cooked before eaten, and typically appear in boiled or stewed dishes. Satoimo can be added to miso soup, Japanese hot pot (nabe), Japanese curry or appear battered and deep fried.



**Nagaimo (yam)** and its wild mountain variety **yamaimo** are slightly different in taste, texture and shape, but are prepared and consumed in the same way: sliced and grilled, or eaten raw. Raw nagaimo is grated to form a sticky, paste-like cream known as tororo. Tororo is used as a topping for rice, soba or udon noodles, or mixed with dashi (fish stock) for flavor. Some people experience a slight reaction when raw nagaimo comes in contact with their skin. This can result in a tingling sensation around the lips.



**Renkon (lotus root)**'s attractive pattern makes it a useful vegetable for creating visually appealing dishes. It is not usually eaten raw, but peeled and boiled in water. Depending on how long it is cooked, lotus root may be crunchy like a fresh carrot, or starchy and soft, like a cooked potato.



**Gobo (burdock root)** grow to about one to two meters in length and are cut before sold to make them more manageable. Gobo are always cooked before eaten and are commonly added to soups as a topping. The most popular gobo dish is kinpira gobo, in which gobo and carrots are shred into thin strips, stir fried and glazed with soy sauce, sugar and sake.



**Ninjin (carrot)** are often thicker than carrots seen in North American and European markets although the taste is the same. Ninjin are often enjoyed raw in salads, or cooked into various dishes such as Japanese curry and Japanese hot pot (nabe). Because of their bright color and sturdy consistency, ninjin are often cut into decorative shapes or simply used to add color and visual appeal to a dish.



**Tamanegi (onion)** are usually cooked before eaten, and are a typical ingredient of many fried and stewed dishes such as Japanese curry, donburi (meals served over a bowl of rice), and Japanese hot pot (nabe). Onions may also be an ingredient in miso soup or grilled alongside meat.

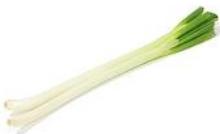


**Shoga (ginger)** is a winter flavor, used to add heat to winter meals or served with fish to counter the "fishy" smell. Thinly sliced, pickled ginger, called gari, is served with sushi and eaten in between pieces of sushi to clear the palate. Another kind of pickled ginger, beni shoga, is commonly served with heavy meats or fried foods such as yakisoba and tonkatsu. Beni shoga is a dark red pickle with a stronger taste than gari.

Other Vegetables:



**Takenoko (bamboo shoot)** symbolizes spring more than any other vegetable. As its name (lit. "child of bamboo") suggests, takenoko is the soft top of a young bamboo plant. Takenoko must be harvested just before the plant peaks out of the soil, otherwise it become hard and green.



**Negi (leek, green onion)** are usually described as having a taste similar to the green onion, though sweeter. There are as many different varieties of negi as there are regions of Japan; however, the two most common are the Kanto variety (mostly white stem) and the Kansai variety (mostly green stem).



**Tomatos** are mostly eaten in Western style cooking, raw in salads or used as a garnish. While it is one of the most popular vegetables in Japan, it is rarely cooked in Japanese dishes. For their size and color, cherry tomatoes are especially popular in bento boxes.



**Kyuri (cucumber)** are usually thinner than Western cucumbers and are always eaten unpeeled. They are commonly found raw in salads or as a garnish or pickled in iced brine. Kyuri are a popular summer time vegetable.



**Nasu (eggplant, aubergine)** [or **Nasubi** in Kumamoto-ben!] are smaller and less bitter than their North American and European counterparts. They are an important vegetable in the Japanese cuisine and used in a wide variety of dishes.



**Piman (Green pepper)** comes from the French word for pepper, poivron. Japanese piman are usually smaller than bell peppers. They have a thin skin and sweet taste.



**Shishito (Small Japanese green pepper)** are a smaller variety of piman. They are generally a sweet and mild pepper, although some varieties can be quite spicy.



**Kabocha (pumpkin)** make their appearance in fall and winter. Kabocha's high vitamin A content made it an important vegetable for northern Japan's long winters. Kabocha is often enjoyed as tempura or boiled in sugar and soy sauce resulting in a soft, sweet dish.



Foreign visitors to Japan may notice the frequent addition of corn to Japanese breads, pizzas, pasta, salads and more. **Tomorokoshi (corn)** is so popular that local growers cannot meet demand. Most tomorokoshi is now imported from the United States.



**Okura (okra)** has a sticky layer surrounding the seeds of its fruit, producing a consistency similar to nagaimo (yam). When okura is consumed raw, the sticky texture is present, however, it is cooked off when boiled or fried. Okura is a summer vegetable that is often eaten raw in salads, deep fried in tempura, or served with soy sauce and katsuobushi (smoked bonito flakes). Okura leaves are not commonly consumed in Japan.



**Goya (bitter melon)** is the most famous vegetable in Okinawan cuisine and the key ingredient in goya champuru, Okinawa's signature dish composed of stir fried goya, tofu and eggs. Goya is well known for its bitter taste.

Mushrooms:



**Shiitake** are one the most popular mushrooms in Japanese cooking, and are also well known outside of Japan. They are available fresh or dried, with the latter being soaked in water before being used. Shiitake mushrooms can be found in various dishes such as nabe (hot pot) dishes, boiled dishes and tempura.



**Maitake** mushrooms are another very popular mushroom in Japanese cuisine. They grow in large colonies and are sometimes referred to as the king of mushrooms.



**Bunashimeji** is another very popular, cultivated mushroom.



**Matsutake** are highly priced gourmet mushrooms that cannot be cultivated and are available only in autumn. They are found under pine trees (matsu), and are most valuable when picked just before surfacing with the umbrella still closed. Matsutake are enjoyed in various ways such as grilled or cooked with rice.



**Enoki** is a cultivated mushroom with a crunchy texture (but can become chewy) used in hot pot dishes.



**Hiratake (oyster mushrooms)** have many different-looking varieties. Eringi is a popular example of a cultivated hiratake.

### Pome Fruits:



**Nashi (Japanese Pear)** are in season during the late summer and autumn and are generally eaten peeled. Western pears are also available in the country, and are known as yonashi (Western pears). Compared to the Western pear, nashi are larger, crispier and have a similar but lighter taste and a rougher skin. Furthermore, they are spherical rather than "pear-shaped".



Among the many **Ringo (Apple)** varieties, the large, red and crispy fuji apple is most popular. Often believed to have been named after iconic Mount Fuji, the apple is actually named after the small town in Aomori Prefecture where it was cultivated in the 1930s. Apples are generally eaten raw after peeling. They are in season during autumn and early winter.

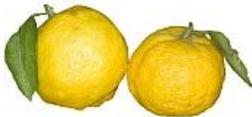


**Kaki (Japanese Persimmon)** are in season in late autumn and winter when they are often seen hanging on otherwise barren trees. Kaki are most commonly enjoyed raw after being peeled and cut into pieces. But they are also dried and eaten, similar to figs.

### Citrus Fruits:



**Mikan (Mandarin Orange)** are the most popular type of Japanese oranges, which are generally known as kan (some other orange varieties are iyokan, ponkan, etc.). Mikan peel easily and do not have seeds and are widely popular as a dessert or snack when they are in season in early winter.



**Yuzu** are sour, lemon sized fruits that have a distinctively Japanese fragrance. While yuzu have little pulp, their juice is often used in seasoning and their rind is used as a garnish. Yuzu are in season during the winter.



**Sudachi** are small and sour lemon-like fruits, similar to yuzu. However, sudachi are considerably smaller than yuzu, are green rather than yellow, and are pulpier. Sudachi are often squeezed over grilled fish.



**Kinkan (Kumquat)** are small orange-like fruits that are usually eaten whole without peeling. They have a pleasant sourness that is not as powerful as that of yuzu or sudachi and have a substantial amount of pulp as well as a few seeds. Kinkan are also used to make marmalade and a sweet type of liqueur. They are in season during the winter.

#### Stone Fruits:



**Momo (Peach)** are generally larger, softer and more expensive than Western peaches, and their flesh is usually white rather than yellow. Peaches are commonly eaten raw after being peeled. Japanese peaches are in season during the summer.



**Sakuranbo (Cherry)** are in season during mid-summer. The majority of domestic cherries are produced in Yamagata Prefecture, where the satonishiki cherry was cultivated and the fruit is celebrated as a local symbol. Darker colored "American Cherries" are also widely available in Japanese supermarkets.



**Ume (Japanese Plum)** is usually translated as "plum", even though the fruit has botanically more in common with the apricot. Ume are rarely eaten raw, but are most commonly pickled into umeboshi (pictured here) and eaten with a bowl of white rice or inside rice balls (onigiri). Ume are also used to produce umeshu or "plum wine", a popular sweet liqueur. Ume is in season during the early summer, and lends its name to the rainy season (tsuyu or "plum rain" in Japanese).

#### Berries:



**Ichigo (Strawberry)** in Japan are not fundamentally different from those in the West, but the large, sweet, attractive and ultimately expensive varieties are preferred. The berries are incorporated into Western style cakes and pastries, but they are also commonly enjoyed on their own. Strawberries are in season during late winter and early spring.



**Budo (Grape)** do not differ much from their Western counterparts, and the large, sweet, attractive and ultimately expensive varieties are preferred. The main difference is that the skins of Japanese grapes are usually quite thick, and the grapes are therefore peeled before being eaten. One of the most popular Japanese varieties of grapes is the dark purple Kyoho grape, which is particularly large. Grapes are usually eaten on their own, but are also used for making wines. Grapes are in season during late summer and early autumn.

## Melons

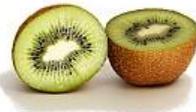


**Melons** are the prototypical luxury fruit in Japan, and can be sold for over 10,000 yen per piece. Nonetheless, moderately priced melons are more common. A wide variety of melons is available in Japan, including green fleshed melons like muskmelons, orange fleshed melons like cantaloupes and even white and yellow fleshed varieties. Melons are usually cut open and the flesh of the fruit is enjoyed raw at the end of a meal. Melons are in season during the late spring and summer



**Suika (Watermelons)** are the representative fruit of summer. Like their Western counterparts, they are large in size with a hard rind and a sweet, crunchy, juicy flesh. The first seedless watermelons were created in Japan in the 1930s, and nowadays there are also small numbers of square shaped and other highly priced premium exemplars.

## Others:



**Kiwis** in Japan differ very little from the kiwi sold elsewhere in the world. Kiwis are usually eaten raw with the skin removed. Domestic kiwis are in season during the late winter and early spring, but imported kiwis are available all year round.



**Ichijiku (Figs)** in Japan are usually peeled and eaten raw, but they are also popular in their dried form or are processed into jams. Figs are in season during late summer and early fall.

[All information taken from <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e620.html> (Go look for even more info!)]