

**The first in a multi-volume definitive series on the art of Japanese cuisine that will be the standard work for many years to come.**

**Subsequent volumes will appear annually and will describe and illustrate the technical aspects of Japanese cuisine, such as Umami, Sauce & Seasoning, Cutting and Slicing, Simmering and Steaming, Grilling and Frying, Sushi and Other Cuisine, Desserts, Ingredients...**

THE JAPANESE  
CULINARY  
ACADEMY'S  
COMPLETE  
JAPANESE CUISINE

INTRODUCTION TO  
JAPANESE CUISINE  
Nature, History and Culture

JAPANESE CULINARY ACADEMY

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with NAKANO Haruo**

# sample spreads & photos



## Honzen Cuisine

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, people ate meals sitting on tatami mats with the food served on small individual tray tables. The tables, which came in many forms, were about thirty to forty centimeters square and either had no legs or were raised on the rim of four legs. Each tray setting held two soup and up to three side dishes (this arrangement, called *shichi-ju-san-ai* ["one soup, three dishes," see p. 174], constituted the ordinary but quite respectable daily meal. To entertain a guest, a *rai-ai* (second tray) was served with one more soup and two more dishes. This second tray was placed to the right of the main *honzen* tray with the *shichi-ju-san-ai*—the meal table arrangement of two soups and five dishes, or *ni-ju-gu-ai*. These trays formed the basic building blocks of *honzen* style cuisine; if *honzen* dishes were desired, a *rai-ai* (third tray) could be added, and so on. The number of trays came to signify the importance of the meal, and feast with up to seven settings for each guest became common practice between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

No key extravagance that the number of courses was the preeminent, which included formal serving dishes alongside table decorations fashioned of artificial flowers of gold and silver—in pursuit of outward ostentation, however, the *honzen* style laid focus on the food itself. This falling eventually inspired the use of *honzen* as a ceremonial setting.

*Honzen* cuisine underwent gradual reform from the seventeenth century onward, persisting into the early post-World War II era as the main style for entertaining guests. A principal characteristic was the serving of more dishes than a person could eat, including certain foods that were according to custom not consumed then and there, but rather packed up at the end of the meal with other leftovers to be taken home by guests.

The *honzen* style survives in a more limited form today in the banquet cuisine prepared by Japanese *ryokan* inns for large groups, as well as in the courses served during Japanese-style wedding receptions.

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日本料理 焼魚料理  
Kaniwa Misu-han-paku  
Grilled Barracuda with Miso-Yuzu-yaki Baste

The refreshing fragrance of yuzu and rich carbonates of kaniwa highlight the subtle essence of barracuda in this simple yet sublime grilled dish. [see p. 187](#)

## Wabi and Sabi

The aesthetic concepts of *wabi* and *sabi* emerged in the sixteenth century. "*Sabi*" is closely connected both with the rusting (*shina*) and deterioration of iron and the pathos felt at the sight of something worn, rained, or desolate. *Sabi* is a term that has been historically used in literature to express the beauty of something that has passed its prime and is in the process of decline, as well as the fulfillment that can be found in *akubitsu*, the pathos of being alone. "*Wabi*" comes from the word "*sabishii*," which is used to express the disolate or miserable feeling of unfulfilled or unrequited sentiments. *Wabi-uta* originally expressed how a person felt when feelings of love were not returned, but it gradually came to connote the condition of poverty or economic want. Poverty is not a desirable condition, but the idea developed that contentment could be better achieved by a simple life than one of material wealth, and this aesthetic was described by the word "*wabi*." At first *wabi* was used for a style of tea ceremony at which the wealthy would put aside the luxuries of their lives for the day to hold a deliberately austere party in a rustic, humble structure. In due course, people who might be genuinely poor but were known for their spiritually uplifting and artistically tasteful tea gatherings came to be highly respected, and the tea gatherings (*wabi-uta*) held according to these principles were called *wabi-uta*.

In the seventeenth century, *sabi* took its place among Japan's aesthetic concepts as the great poet Matsuo Basho wrote haikai poetry, the abbreviated form of verse characterized by a sense of tranquility and refined simplicity. What is distinctive about the aesthetics of *wabi* and *sabi* is that they not only capture certain ideas in art and aesthetics but they are also deeply connected to the very way of life that they describe. It may even be better to consider them less as aesthetic terms than as ways of viewing humanity.

The influence of this perspective is also evident in Japanese cuisine. A splendid and luxurious feast is complete, leaving nothing more to be desired. Yet a different kind of feast is possible, one that falls just short of enough, leaving something to be desired. Without relying on particularly unusual ingredients, the host can prepare a meal that will be deeply appreciated, using plants that grow wild in the hills and fields or ordinary ingredients at their freshest. Japanese cuisine does indeed incorporate the *wabi* and *sabi* aesthetic.



Hasegawa Sabaku's "The Pine" Fading Season

90 ARTISTIC AWARENESS



## 秋の味覚 揚げたて Meshi Autumn Faldome Meshi

The word *faldome* (see p. 97) refers to the bones of fish, frozen from blanching the head to waste in one place and it is used for dishes featuring several varieties of simmered and fried foods, artfully arranged together, or for combinations of dry confections in the shape of pine needles, maple leaves and so on. In this *faldome meshi*, ingredients such as pigskin and *pan-fried* are arranged to reflect autumn leaves or landscapes.

*Tadaki* is a special fish, low in fat and with much of the smooth white flesh, that comes into season during the cool period from late autumn to early spring. Lightly salted, the fish is sweet and rich flavored in a way that easily crushes the mouth, aroma and flavor of ingredients like *asamushi* and log grown outside mushrooms. [see p. 199](#)

## Ageru [DEEP-FRYING]

*Tempura* is the most common dish prepared by deep-frying (*ageru*) ingredients in a high temperature in a large amount of oil. The batter (*ayuma*) into which the ingredients are dipped before they are deep-fried traps their subtle aroma during high-temperature, rapid cooking. The aroma of *tempura* is in the combination of textures—the crisp coating contrasts with the tender, moist ingredient within. All sorts of variations are possible by applying seasonings to the ingredients or changing the *ayuma*.



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**Japanese Knives**  
虎子  
Deba, Uso, Santoku, Nagata, Usubi

These are several kinds of traditional Japanese knives used for cutting food. The Deba is a large cleaver used for cutting fish and meat. The Uso is a utility knife used for general purpose cutting. The Santoku is a slicing knife used for slicing food. The Nagata is a chef's knife used for general purpose cutting. The Usubi is a paring knife used for peeling and slicing.

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**EDITORIAL SUPERVISION**

The Japanese Culinary Academy was founded in 2004 to support the advancement and spread of Japanese cuisine. JCA is engaged in educational, cultural and technical research as well as in dissemination of the results of its research for people living not only in Japan but other parts of the world. Aimed at contributing to the promotion of understanding of Japanese cuisine and enhancement of its appeal, JCA activities also include the development of food culture, training of professionals, nutritional education for the upcoming generations, and exchange programmes for chefs around the world.  
<http://culinary-academy.jp/>

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講談社 SHUHARI

“Japanese cuisine is inextricably tied to the bounty of nature and the cycle of the seasons—a wealth of photographs and expert commentary define the special traditions of food in Japan.”

This volume is the prologue to a multi-volume set, *The Japanese Culinary Academy's Complete Japanese Cuisine*, compiled mainly for professional cooks and chefs in Japan and around the world. True appreciation of a cuisine begins by gaining an understanding of the background presented here. Not a how-to guide, this first volume of *Complete Japanese Cuisine* sets forth the fundamentals and scientific background of important traditions, showing how certain tastes and cooking methods developed—not just the product of experience and intuition—but sound logic and scientific good sense.

— MURATA Yoshihiro  
Director, Japanese Culinary Academy

There is no doubt that interest in Japanese food has really burgeoned in Europe over the last 10 or 15 years. Perhaps the health benefits were an important catalyst in the growth of its popularity, but large numbers of people now appreciate Japanese food for its intrinsic good flavours and textures born of its sensitivity to season, freshness and presentation.

The last 15 years have seen a lot of Japanese cookbooks appear from local publishers across Europe, with a noticeable accent on ease of preparation and a contemporary fusion style, interacting with local tastes and ingredients. Yet at the same time professional chefs have become increasingly influenced by Japanese cuisine and it is conspicuous how frequently the TV chefs have been referring to it in their shows. This has contributed to an increasing demand for a reference source on more 'pure' Japanese cuisine and the words 'dashi' and 'umami' have even entered the English language!

This new project from the Japanese Culinary Academy and Shuhari Initiative is very exciting precisely because it addresses this need for something new on traditional Japanese cuisine that has an appeal that goes beyond the purely professional market. The fact that *The Japanese Culinary Academy's Complete Japanese Cuisine* is a project that is ongoing over several volumes and is conceived, designed and written by Japan's foremost chefs and culinary experts makes it very special and completely unprecedented in its scope. Furthermore, the sheer beauty of the design and the quality of the photography, writing and book production combine to create a series that will be the standard work on Japanese cuisine for many years to come.

This first volume *Introduction to Japanese Cuisine - Nature, History and Culture* contains absolutely everything that the chef or serious cook needs to know to fully understand the cuisine and its cultural context, and is superbly illustrated. I believe anyone who has a serious desire to understand the art that is Japanese cuisine will absolutely want to have this book in their library.

There are no others like it.

