
JAPANESE FOOD CULTURE

Kazuho Wakabayashi

Saitama University

Christmas food in Japan

We will discuss Japanese food culture. It is important to know that Japanese culture has both of diversity and originality. We will explain how with reference to the two faces of Japanese food culture.

Firstly, I will introduce how we celebrate Christmas and what we eat on this day. Like many countries around the world, in Japan December 25th is Christmas. I think it is different from Ukraine. In general, Japanese people eat chicken, fried potatoes and pizza for dinner, after that we eat Christmas cake for dessert which I will now go on to talk about.

During the Christmas season, Japanese people eat chicken with fried potato. In other countries like the USA and Europe, it is normal that people eat turkey, duck, goose or other kind of fowl at Christmas. So, I think that Japanese culture of eating chicken in Christmas is unusual for other countries. Perhaps the most unusual thing for foreign people who celebrate Christmas is that KFC is one of the most popular Christmas dinners in Japan. It is because KFC spread the culture of eating chicken in Japan. So, if you have opportunity to stay in Japan at Christmas, please try to eat chicken for dinner.

Next, I will talk about Christmas cake in Japan. In other countries, each country has a culture of eating a kind of Christmas pudding. For example, French people eat *Bûche de Noël* in Christmas. In Japan, people eat decoration cake at Christmas. And the decoration cake is the most typical model in Christmas, which has strawberry and chocolate and fresh cream. As to the origin of such decoration cake,

it goes back to when Japanese sweets shops called “Fujiya” started to sell it in 1922. Other countries have original cakes, but Japanese decoration cakes are also nice. Please try it if you come to Japan in Christmas season.

Hinako Fujita
Saitama University

Japanese Food on New Year’s Day

I will introduce the traditional Japanese dishes that are eaten on January 1st. It is called *sechi* cuisine. It is a dish that we eat together with our family and relatives on January 1st and is the first dish we eat in the New Year. Various ingredients are beautifully packed in a multi-tiered box, giving a gorgeous and congratulatory impression. It can be said to be one of the typical Japanese dishes at this time of year.

What I would like to pay attention to this time is the ingredients for the dishes. The ingredients of the dishes have wishes. If you eat while remembering the meaning, it will be more enjoyable to eat. The following are examples of such foods:

Kuromame (black bean). The color black is said to have a power of amulets, and it has the meaning of dispelling evil spirits and the desire to work diligently enough to get a black tan.

Kazunoko. *Kazunoko* is a herring egg, and there are many eggs. From this, it is a lucky charm that wishes for the prosperity of descendants.

Tazukuri. This is a sardine fry which is boiled sweetly. The fields that used sardines as fertilizer for crops had become a good harvest. Therefore, we eat this with the hope that the grains will grow abundantly.

Gobo-tataki (seared burdock). Burdock roots go deep into the ground, so it is hoped that the foundation of the house will be strong.